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A COMMENTARY
ON
THE PROVERBS:
WITH
A NEW TRANSLATION,
AND WITH
SOME OF THE ORIGINAL EXPOSITIONS RE-EXAMINED IN
A CLASSIFIED LIST.

BY
REV. JOHN MILLER.

SECOND EDITION, LARGELY AMENDED.



PRINCETON, N. J.:
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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

There are mills in Holland which move by the tides of the sea. The peculiarity about them is, that their wheels turn in the same direction and with like effect whether the tides be ebbing or flowing. Something like this has befallen the mind of the writer in his experience of this work. Fine critics have impressed him either way. His insistence has been, that Solomon must have had rare gifts, and, therefore, rare sense in all his Proverbs, and, secondly, that the Bible is a small book, and meant for "instruction in righteousness," and, therefore, putting these two things together, that it is impossible that a Proverb should be a mere platitude, like scores even in the Revision, and, secondly, that it is impossible that it should be secular. It seemed to us a pious act to make the Proverbs, if one legitimately could, both wise and pious.

Now the Dutch mill principle operates thus: The echo of fine critics coming to the same conclusion as our book, of course has been a flood tide, and it has set in on both sides of the water; but then we are conscious of this, that a certain sort of decrinal, as, for example, that of Spurgeon, or, still more effective than that, the disfavor of men who have every linguistic gift, helps by its ebb-tide just as much as the other by its flow. And the nature of the help is this: If a man takes a text like the following, "A false witness will utter lies" (E. V., 14 : 5), and finds it essentially the same in the Revision, and pronounces it impossible as an inspired shrewdness of speech, it may be all very well to denounce him as reading his own wisdom into the text if the Hebrew is dead against him; but if the unsavory writing only calls his attention to the Hebrew, and he shows by distinct criticism that the Hebrew not only tolerates but *demands* a better sense, then for

a fine critic never to use his fine criticism at all, but with a wave of the hand to dismiss by a general objection that the innovation is too great, in that case the low tide is as helpful as the high tide. It demonstrates a prescriptive prejudice, and not only the existence of such a prejudice, but that we must remain under it. If I read in both versions, "Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly" (17 : 12), and exclaim against such a sense, and show critically why it ought not to be ; if I show critically that "*in*" is in the first clause, but is allowed to remain silent in both versions, because the verb to "*meet*" takes that preposition ; and then, insisting that it remain silent in the second, read thereby "*rather than a fool his folly*," the denunciation that sweeps such changes generally, without coming down to each one, is a support and not a hindrance. It throws a mantle over all the undertaking. And the abler the critic is, if he does not use his skill and come in to each actual case, the more he demonstrates a rut for the sake of a rut, and the better he explains the vagueness of these gnomic texts. "Let a bear robbed of her cubs meet a man rather than a fool his folly," is so much more solemn than what an absolute linguistic falsity has made out, that we look at it as a sort of specimen instance of what the prescriptive past is fencing us off from of our future interpretations.

If our argument were the other way, that Solomon was a mere Lacon, and was not to be looked to too nicely either for sense or nexus, there might be less to wonder at ; but a work that pleads sense and gives nexus, and claims that the Bible is a religious book, and then backs all up by linguistic proofs that the worthless sense trespasses upon all the grammar, is a work which cavils help, if only they object and denounce, without the least show of linguistic replication.

Large amendments have been made. Fifteen years have made the author's mind clearer, especially in the matters of Justification by Faith and the alleged Perseverance of Believers.

JOHN MILLER.

PRINCETON, Feb. 2, 1887.

P R E F A C E.

THE author has brought to this work, and carries away from it greatly increased, these four convictions:—

First, that the Old Version of the Bible ought to be kept as the standard in English speech as long as it is practically possible;

Second, that to object to anything that corrects it, however much it may bend it from its sense, is a mistake, and, in a large degree, a wickedness;

Third, that it may some day be given up; and

Fourth, that, in preparation for that event, men should translate without fear or favor, and that every thought should be turned on what must have been the real mind of the Holy Spirit.

1. That the Old should serve as long as possible, appears from the fact that the same peoples will never unite upon a New. A Bible in every sect is a state of things that may be almost sure to come; but must sorely try the faith of the Church.

2. To prevent this by repression is wicked. To prefer the work of King James to the actual mind of the Spirit is fetich. To gather what God meant and risk all consequences is an evident instinct of faith. And to condemn a man because his work is new, as a thing kept separate from the thought that it is unscholarly or false, is as rank a superstitious fault as the Jews fell into with the text, when big letters or little letters were kept wrong through idolatrous devotion.

3. There may come a time when mistakes will balance ad-

vantages; when the meddling of scholars will have grown so great as to honeycomb the whole with too many exceptions. The old ice will then be found too rotten, and there will come the avalanche; and

4. There should be a preparing for this; in that all this meddling should be correct. Men of conscientious minds should batter away at these man-made walls. The Church should smile upon the work, so that humble spirits should engage in it. In other words, there is a MIND OF THE SPIRIT; and no translation under a human king should lay a shroud upon it. If the Version were but two weeks old, a man might dig innocently under whole acres of it; and, as it is whole centuries old, it becomes our fetish if we make all scholars that have come since, knock their heads even to what is most clumsy in the idol.

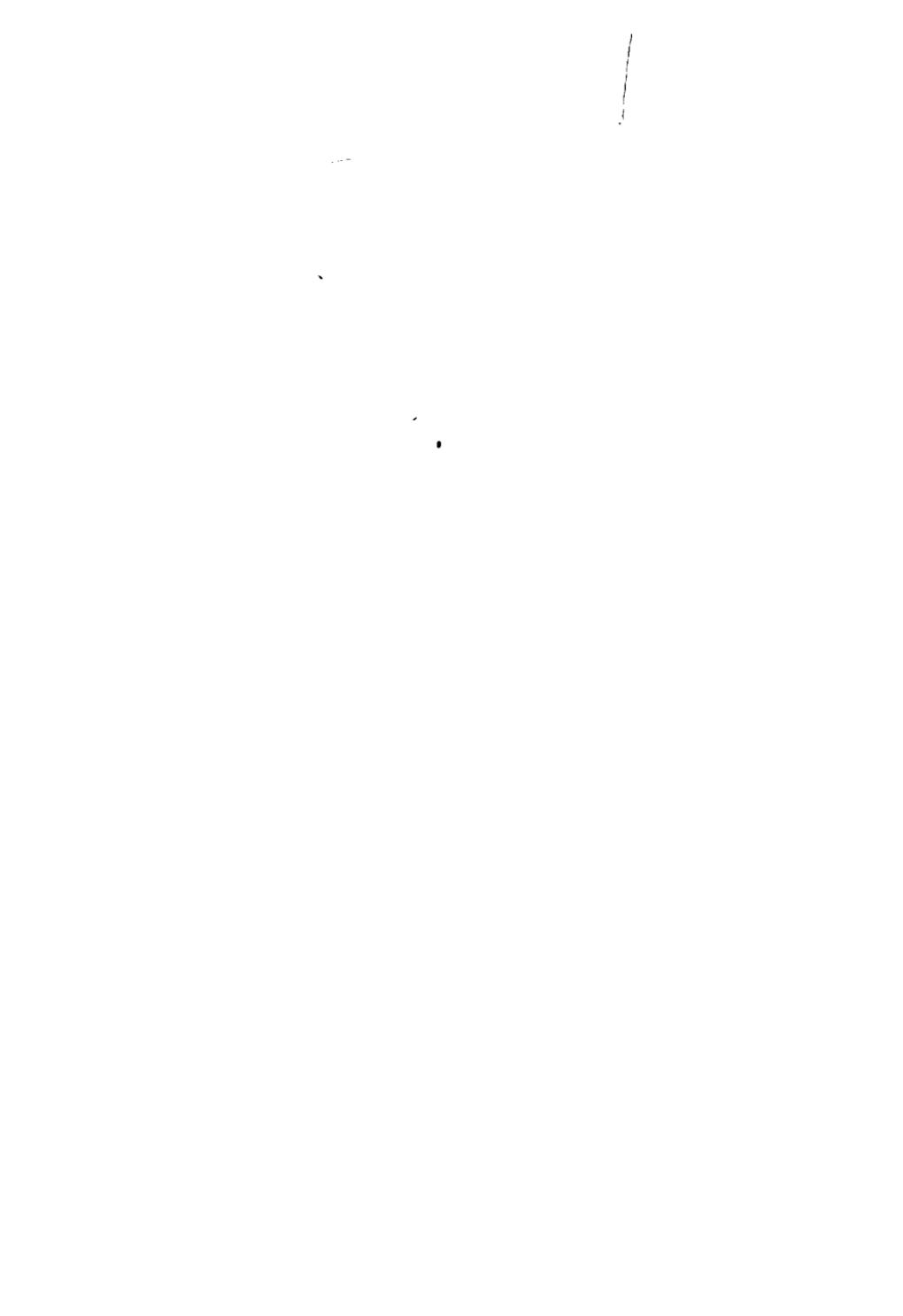
Is it not time that our commentaries had become more downright? Ought not men to strike more directly for the sense, and leave all lesser considerations? Partly for what is hortatory, and partly to be popular; partly, too, to be illustrative, and partly to be patient with the usual sense, men are turned from the forthright work of deciphering the original; and when to this is added a certain glamour of sanctity, which grows about a version, men do work in Scripture which seems really profane. Books have been just published which patiently expound verses in senses which years ago they were proved not to have, and the Church seems to applaud that as better conduct, on the whole, than this perpetual eviscerating of a more actual sense.

What little the present writer can contribute with what furniture he has takes the form, under his natural impulses, of *mere interpretation*. If he could overtake all the Bible, he would be satisfied merely to be a seeker of the sense. This ought to be (*a*) popular; for the Bible was written for the people, and, we would think, would expound itself popularly. It ought to be (*b*) hortative; for, simply done, it is an unfolding often of mere hortation. And as to being (*c*) illustrative; it will be illustrative in the text itself. The Bible is a string of parables, and an honest vigor in simply mining at its sense would give, in our view, a new epoch in all hermeneutical exercitation.

Begging God to give him success in this one direction of his effort, viz : of the plain sense of the Holy Spirit, he commends the work humbly to His care, that He may carry anything that is true in it to pulpits and to pens, by which it will be better expressed ; and that He may smother anything false, and prevent its mischiefs.

JOHN MILLER.

PRINCETON, N. J., *June 27, 1872.*



INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. OBJECTION TO THIS NEW TRANSLATION.

The author finds himself confronting the church with a commentary half whose texts are colored with a new significance. The result intimidates him. Poetic Scripture is known as difficult, and has been talked of as badly rendered ; but that the work should have been so bad, and thirty centuries should have dozed and dawdled over this the best part of Old Testament inspiration, seems quite incredible, and can alone be defended by bold proofs ; by arraigning the expositors for entire and consistent blunderings on a wrong idea, and insisting that we shall begin anew : that the Bible is a Bible, and, as our whole religion, is the Book of Books ; that Poor Richard maxims, vapid and false at that, make no part of revelation ; and that the moment we dive below this, and look for religious teachings, Solomon begins to grow natural and to grow great. We find the Paul at last of the Old Testament time. His work reflects the Calvin and the Edwards of our day. Sermons may be best for us, but proverbs for those Nomad tribes. Their preaching had the odor of the fields. And "Ecclesiastes," the self-styled "Preacher," would be just the man to inherit this habit of thought, and seize texts that had been carried to the hills, and that gave him no higher trouble than to cull them by the help of the Spirit and to pick them like pebbles out of the sand.

§ 2. DEFENCE OF THIS NEW TRANSLATION.

Such then will be our defence. In this field of Scripture extraordinary results must follow, even in feeble hands, from a proper theory. In the Australian gold-fields a true geology might find gold faster than promiscuous digging. Grammar is not exact. It is only, like the click of Morse's telegraph dots, approximate and not hard to be mistaken. We read a book partly by grammar, but largely by logic or the analogy of the sense. Suppose the Proverbs never had a logic.

It is meant by that,—suppose they never had a theory, or a thought as to what one had to expect. Suppose that in the Australian fields we were looking for silver, or brass, or even potatoes, just as it might hap: in hill-tops or water-courses; promiscuously; hither or thither; would we find as much gold? Would not even a plain mind come in, and, if it had a geologic plan, and, moreover, an aim altogether one, heap up the one thing, gold, cheaper and faster than abler and more industrious hands? Now there has been a strange dishonor to this gold-mine of the Proverbs: first, in not expecting gold at all, and second, in not expecting it in streaks, or in such a bed as that one panful would lead on to another.

§ 3. THEORY OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS.

The Proverbs must have three traits: first, wisdom; second, spirituality; third, a *nexus*.

§ 4. FIRST, WISDOM; OR, THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF COMMONPLACE IN THE PROVERBS.

A man that believes in the Proverbs and expects them to be profound, will wait till he gets down to that profoundness; while everybody else will be put off with a commonplace meaning.

That there cannot be any commonplace, appears, first, from the rank of their author; second, from his wisdom, which was supernatural; third, from his inspiration, which was complete; and fourth, from their nature, proverbs of all things else on earth not admitting of a commonplace interpretation.

Solomon in his rank.

Solomon, in his rank or grade of intellectual and æsthetic life, was not only a king, and not only the son of a king, and not only the son of a very extraordinary poet and man of thought, but held this grade in a land which had been the her-

itor of Egyptian strength, and in an age before or since not equalled among the Israelitish people.

It is true all this has to be learned from the Bible. Though Solomon printed himself upon the East, it is astonishing how Eastern legend adds nothing to his history. And even modern thought does little to make him greater. He has been compared to Louis XV., and David, his father, to Louis XIV: David in his terrible wars and in his splendors like Le Grand Monarque, and Solomon in profusenesses and license like the younger king. But, of course, this touches either in but a single point. No land has added much to the Scriptures in what they say of Solomon; and, if any one will search them and study them together, one must see that here was an intellectual prince; that, if he talked proverbs, he could not have talked poor ones; that, if he had three thousand (1 Kings, 4:32), and these were worked down to nine hundred, they must be nine hundred gems; and, if the world begins to think that, and take any man's translation, and throw out all that is commonplace, it might at once become the epoch of a great many hermeneutical innovations.

Solomon supernaturally wise.

But Solomon, king's son as he was, was also a living miracle. There was something shadowy in his intellectual prowess. We are not sure that he was a Christian; and, therefore, when he asked for wisdom (1 Kings 3:9), it may have been for intellect. The Queen of Sheba fainted when she saw all his taste and genius (1 Kings 10:4, 5). If God essayed *once* to give to a man talent in answer to a special choice, and talent had taken almost its name from him in all the ages of the East, how safe the church must be in saying, These Proverbs must mean something; every one of them. We are not now to be put off with any mere jangle of words. Each text must be a brilliant. And we will positively lay away a verse, before we will do it the indignity of any mere commonplace specification!

Nay, might not this make a new epoch in *all* our hermeneutics? for thirdly,

Solomon was inspired.

This, after all, transcends everything. Balaam may have been very shrewd; but what of that to the moments when he was inspired! Solomon may have been miraculously able, and superhuman genius may have colored all he said; but yet at times he might have almost purposely drivelled. Like a strong swimmer he might have cast himself upon his back for relief. But how anything of that when specially inspired? and how when his proverbs had been sifted over? It is impossible to imagine a poor text in Proverbs; and, especially when we add the purpose of gnomic writing, or, in other words,

The nature of Proverbs themselves.

What business had a proverb to be dull? In common hands history may sometimes nod: but how as to these "dark sayings" (1:6)? The idea is that they are condensed wisdom. Is he a good expositor who does not insist that they shall so appear?

And now put all these things together. Would it not be an intellectual miracle to find in Solomon a stupid Proverb?

Yet then, in the light of this, look at our authorized English:—

§ 5. OBJECTION TO THE OLD TRANSLATION.

The Proverbs, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Job and, perhaps, the Book of Canticles, are specimens of the most exquisite English. They are polished to the last degree. English has modelled itself upon them. And hapless commentators, who have drifted away, have found in the very first sentence that they are sailing in different waters. But man cannot live by euphony alone. Let us consider these sentences:—"The wise in heart will receive commandments" (10:8). "In the lips of him that hath understanding, wisdom is found" (10:13). "He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction; but, he that refuseth reproof, erreth" (10:17). "Destruction shall be to the workers of

iniquity" (10:29). "The thoughts of the righteous are right" (12:5). "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad" (12:25). "A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke" (13:1). "A righteous man hateth lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame" (13:5). We are disposed to quote in the largest quantity, because the absence of any faith in the deep meaning of what they rendered, becomes the more obvious in the work of the translators. Where is there any depth in texts like these?—"Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded" (13:13). "A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies" (14:5). "He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good" (16:20). "Also to punish the just is not good, nor to strike princes for equity" (17:26). "The fear of the Lord tendeth to life" (19:23). "The just man walketh in his integrity" (20:7). "The way of man is foward and strange: but as for the pure his work is right" (21:8). "God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness" (21:12). "Let not thine heart envy sinners; but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long" (23:17). "When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall" (29:16).

Now we are not satisfied alone to ask, Is there any rugged sense in these passages? but must ask further, Is there not a false principle in them? Considering their amazing origin, has there not been too little expectation of both brilliancy and depth? Pythagoras and Plato; would we not stare, if they turned up such special apothegms? We have a right to insist upon this. Even Lacon; would he not suffer, if he were presented in such a dress? A divinity that hedges a ghostly book seems to numb us as to insisting that it shall have great sense. But, forget all this. Treat Solomon as though he were one of us. Forget the Empress, and think of some plain woman in the Rue St. Antoine. And might not this simple prospecting for gold create a new mining, and give the very idea that has been mentioned of over-innovation?

Still, let us not be misunderstood. We are not teaching the

doctrine that we are to *supply* sense to Solomon, but only teaching the doctrine that we are to start sure he has it. We are teaching that, if a man translates this Eastern prodigy, and reads,—“A faithful witness will not lie,” there is some screw loose in his translation; that, if he translates whole pages in that way, there is a false theory in his work; that such was the fame of Solomon and such his mind, as both supernatural and inspired, that these texts ought to have been considered mentally incredible; and that grave men should have refused to translate, or else indefinitely postponed, or, better still, patiently dug till there began to come out some earth of a better color.

And this is not all:—

§ 6. SECOND, SPIRITUALITY; OR, THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF ANYTHING SECULAR IN THE PROVERBS.

The Bible is a religious book. It is a very small one. It is intended for all mankind. We cannot suppose it would be a Poor Richard Almanac; or, that a holy inspiration would show mere secular pith. The apostle tells us the contrary (2 Tim. 3:16).

And yet the work of King James makes no such point as this. His workmen leave us hopelessly secular in many places.

Indeed, their whole Bible seems, helplessly, to lack the clamp of a high typical theory for all its inspirations.

Might we not attempt one?

We have seven parts: (1) History; (2) Prophecy; (3) Liturgy; (4) Miracle; (5) Direct Teaching; (6) Fabled or Apocalyptic Allegory; and (7) these Gnomic texts. Let us build on two common facts:—first, all seven are literal; second, all seven are spiritual.

1. The *History* in both Testaments really was such. Egypt is a country on the Nile; and Pharaoh *re ipsa* governed it. Israel really lived; and Canaan really produced in Chronicles and Mosaic books, a genuine secular narration. Yet still, was it not all spiritual? The Red Sea: would it ever have been

of record? nay, would it ever have been crossed, but as a spiritual allegory?

2. So the *Prophecies*. Babylon was really predicted of. And so was Cyrus. And the prophecies were all fulfilled, and were all a miracle, and were all intended for a supernatural proof. But, high above all such uses, they were link-men of a spiritual meaning. They carried a lantern of the gospel. And all through Isaiah, for example, with a base of secular speech, they had a burden of spiritual knowledge. This is our theory. Sometimes the vision breaks a little; but it is because the gospel-mind bursts too much in upon the prophecy. It is a rift in the vault of heaven. We could cite instances (Is. 45:13, 14; 46:11, 13), as though the prophet wished to let out his secret. At any rate, this is our faith: that every one of the prophetic Scriptures is a Delphic allegory; and, when we come to understand it, every one of its parts will be read as a teaching of the gospel.

3. So of the *Liturgical* works. They are bi-footed. If they limp at all, it is where they cannot be united—the literal and the prophetic. Sometimes they are too sinful to apply to Christ; and sometimes they are too holy to apply to Israel. Generally, they could be sung by both. The Psalms, therefore, are allegoric like the Prophecies.

4. So now are *Miracles*. They are secular. They healed the sick. They fed the multitude. They rent the temple-veil. They were hard secular occurrences. But more; they taught the gospel. The Leper and the Withered Hand were allegoric sights. So was the scene with the Demoniacs. Nature resigned her seat for the double purpose. The Miracles, exactly like the Prophecies, were light-bearers.

5. So of the *Teachings* of Christ. He mourned over Jerusalem (Lu. 19:41), but he meant more. He gave His mother to John (Jo. 19:27); but it meant a great deal more.

6. So of the *Parables*. They were fabled allegories—rich as secular—but with an object altogether spiritual. So the Visions. John was actually in Patmos; and he saw what he has reported—possibly with his physical eyes. But the end was spiritual. We conceive the theory that it was not much prophetic.

These were great Cartoons of the gospel. The "Seals" were God's chastisements. The "Beast" was man's impenitence. The "Prophet" (Rev. 19:20) was the "Little Beast" (Rev. 13:11), and was man's hypocrisy. Babylon was Sodom or Egypt (Rev. 11:8); that is, the City of Destruction (See Bunyan). These were great sensible signs with an inward thought.

7. When, therefore, we come to the *Proverbs*, we are all ready to give them their place. Rest assured they are spiritual. They would never have been written but for a spiritual use. And yet secular. Solomon may have taken them out of the street. They are secular maxims, and some of them of great value; just as the history was of great value of all the kingdom of Israel. But they are not secular when they get into the Bible. Solomon chose them for what is spiritual. They limp sometimes as secular. They are not all true (6:1, 2, 33-35; 14:23). They are outrageously false, at times, as mere Poor Richard's maxims (10:4; 22:29), and cruel (20:16; 28:19). Men cannot get rich and cannot become honored, as of a certainty, in the way they would imply. But they may get rich, spiritually. And hence our faith:—that this spiritual theory of the book might justifiably change everything. If other commentators are without it, we might be right to innovate. It might excuse hosts of alterations. There must have been covered up much mistake. And, pointing out the spots to dig, it might create the fruitful epoch and multiply results throughout this portion of the field of Scripture.

Now add to this a third point:—

§ 7. THIRD, A NEXUS. IMPROBABILITY THAT THE PROVERBS SHOULD BE WITHOUT A THREAD.

In a doctrine like this, we admit there may be a play for fancy; and it may be right to doubt ourselves. But, let the work be undertaken; and let the point be tested. If commentators can find a clear thread through the book, what a blessing! How the work will loom out in all the pomp of Solomon! Such a task may be in its infancy for a long period of years.

Still, what a task ! This track of the giants, with its deep cuts and its high gradings, may be slow to be revealed ; but, how each fresh length of the bed will help ! Like the Sibylline leaves, one page will light another ; and the line, in one place, become a clue to thread the sense all through its more mazy mysteries.

Then, thus we mark the theory :—first, these Proverbs must be deep; second, they must be spiritual; and third, they must be connected—not connected in their secular sense—but connected in their line of religious intimations.

§ 8. PLAN THEREFORE DEFENSIVE.

Too great innovation being the writer's impeachment in his work, he has been led to examine a good deal collaterally, and find how far new readings can be thought to sustain each other. It led to the third portion of the work. The readings for the most part can quote a precedent. Large numbers of them can find a precedent in King James' work; and all of them, (or, if there be any, there are but few exceptions,) can be ranged under a grammatic class that can claim the cover of accepted usage.

Three departments, therefore, comprise the work :—first, a New Translation; second, a Commentary of the text throughout; and third, an Appendix, which selects from the original expositions, and classifies them for mutual support.

I.
NEW TRANSLATION.

PROVERBS.

CHAPTER I.

1 PROVERBS OF SOLOMON, SON OF DAVID, KING OF ISRAEL.

- 2 To know wisdom and admonition; to put a distinct meaning into discriminated speeches;
- 3 to accept clear-sighted admonition, is righteousness and judgment and right behaviour.
- 4 In order to give subtlety to the simple; to the child knowledge and thorough thought;
- 5 the wise man will hear, and increasingly acquire; and a man already become discerning, will gain in capability to guide.
- 6 For putting a distinct meaning into a proverb or an enigma; into the words of the wise and their intricate things;
- 7 the fear of Jehovah is the main knowledge; a wisdom and a discipline that fools despise.
- 8 Hear, my son, the admonition of thy father; and repel not the direction of thy mother;
- 9 for a garland of grace shall these things be for thy head, . and chains about thy neck.
- 10 My son, if sinners would make a door of thy simplicity, afford thou no entrance.

CHAP. I.
THE Proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel;

2 To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;

3 To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;

4 To give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.

5 A wise *man* will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:

6 To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.

7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:

9 For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.

10 My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.

¹¹ If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause;

¹² Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit;

¹³ We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil:

¹⁴ Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse:

¹⁵ My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path:

¹⁶ For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood:

¹⁷ (Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird:)

¹⁸ And they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives.

¹⁹ So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.

²⁰ Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets;

²¹ She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying,

²² How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorner delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

²³ Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

²⁴ Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;

¹¹ If they say, Come with us; let us lay wait for blood;

let us lurk privily for those who are innocent to no purpose;

¹² let us swallow them alive as Sheol, and whole as those that go down into the pit;

¹³ we shall find all precious substance; we shall fill our houses with spoil;

¹⁴ thou shalt cast in thy lot among us; we will all have one purse;

¹⁵ my son, walk not thou in the way with them;

refrain thy foot from their path;

¹⁶ for their feet are running toward evil; and they are making haste to pour out blood;

¹⁷ because it avails not that the net is spread in the very eyes of all the birds;

¹⁸ and these are laying wait for their own blood;

they are lurking privily for their own lives.

¹⁹ So are the paths of every one that seizes upon prey.

It takes away the life of him that gets it in possession.

²⁰ Out of doors, wisdom cries; on the open squares she gives forth her voice.

²¹ Where confusion is at its height she calls, in the opening of the gates; in the citadel she utters her words:—

²² How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and scorers in their own case delight in scorning,

and fools hate knowledge?

²³ Would ye turn at my reproof? behold, I would pour out my spirit upon you;

I would make you know my words.

²⁴ Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded;

- 25 but ye have let go all my counsel;
and would none of my reproof;
26 even I, in the midst of your destruction,
will laugh;
I will mock when your fear enters.
27 When your fear enters like a tempest,
and your destruction comes like a whirlwind;
when distress and anguish come in upon
you;
28 then shall they call upon me, and I will not
answer;
they shall seek me diligently, and shall not
find me.
29 Forasmuch as they hated knowledge;
and did not choose the fear of Jehovah;
30 they did not want my counsel;
they despised all my reproof;
31 therefore do they eat of the fruit of their
way,
and are filled with their own counsellings.
32 For the turning away of the simple slays
them,
and the tranquility of fools destroys them;
33 but whoso hearkens to me dwells safely,
and has been quieted from fear of evil.

- 25 But ye have set at
nought all my counsel,
and would none of my
reproof;
26 I also will laugh
at your calamity; I will
mock when your fear
cometh;
27 When your fear
cometh as desolation,
and your destruction
cometh as a whirlwind;
when distress and an-
guish cometh upon
you:
28 Then shall they
call upon me, but I will
not answer; they shall
seek me early, but they
shall not find me;
29 For that they ha-
ted knowledge, and did
not choose the fear of
the LORD;
30 They would none
of my counsel; they re-
proached all my re-
proof;
31 Therefore shall
they eat of the fruit of
their own way, and be
filled with their own
devices.
32 For the turning
away of the simple
shall slay them, and
the prosperity of fools
shall destroy them.
33 But whoso heark-
eneth unto me shall
dwell safely, and shall
be quiet from fear of
evil.

CHAPTER II.

- 1 My son, if thou wilt take my words,
and hide my commandments with thee,
2 so as to point thine ear toward wisdom,
thou shalt incline thine heart toward dis-
cernment.
3 But if thou wilt cry after discernment,
and lift up thy voice for understanding;
4 if thou wilt seek it like money,
and dig for it as for hid places of store;
5 then shalt thou discern the fear of Jehovah,
and find the knowledge of God.
6 For Jehovah gives wisdom,
out of His mouth knowledge and discern-
ment;

- CHAP II.
My son, if thou wilt
receive my words, and
hide my command-
ments with thee;
2 So that thou in-
cline thine ear unto
wisdom, and apply
thine heart to under-
standing;
3 Yea, if thou criest
after knowledge, and
liftest up thy voice for
understanding;
4 If thou seekest her
as silver, and searchest
for her as for hid trea-
sures;
5 Then shalt thou
understand the fear of
the LORD, and find the
knowledge of God.
6 For the LORD giv-
eth wisdom: out of his
mouth cometh knowl-
edge and understand-
ing.

7 He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.

8 He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.

9 Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.

10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul,

11 Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee;

12 To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things;

13 Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness;

14 Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked;

15 Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths:

16 To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words;

17 Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God.

18 For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.

19 None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.

20 That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous.

21 For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it.

22 But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.

7 and He stores up something stable for the upright, a buckler to them of sound behavior.

8 To keep watch over the paths of judgment He must also guard the way of His saints.

9 Then shalt thou put a distinct meaning upon righteousness and judgment and uprightness,—the whole good track.

10 Because wisdom enters thy heart, and knowledge is pleasant to thy soul,

11 reflection shall watch over thee, discernment shall guard thee.

12 To deliver thee from the way of evil, from the man that utters upturning things,

13 those that forsake level paths to go in the ways of darkness,

14 who rejoice to do evil, exult in the upturnings of evil;

15 who are crooked in their own paths, and turned off of their own tracks.

16 To deliver thee from the strange woman, from the stranger that flatters with her speeches,

17 she who forsakes the guide of her youth, has also forgotten the covenant of her God.

18 Because she has sunk down to death as to her house, and to the shades as to her paths,

19 none that go in to her return again, or overtake the paths of life;

20 for the very purpose that thou mayest walk in the way of the good, and keep the paths of the righteous.

21 For the upright are to inhabit the earth, and the men of integrity to be left in it;

22 but the wicked are to be cut off from the earth, and the faithless to be swept away out of it.

CHAPTER III.

- 1 My son, forget not what I direct,
and let thy heart watch my commandments;
- 2 for length of days and years of life
and prosperity shall make thee greater.
- 3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee.
Bind them upon thy neck;
write them upon the tablet of thy heart.
- 4 And thus find favor and good intelligence
in the eyes of God and man.
- 5 Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart
and lean not to thine own understanding.
- 6 In all thy ways do thou recognize Him
and He shall Himself level thy paths.
- 7 Be not wise in thine own eyes.
Fear Jehovah and depart from evil.
- 8 Let there be healing to thy muscles,
and moisture to thy bones.
- 9 Honor Jehovah from thy substance
and from the first of all thine increase;
- 10 and thy storehouses shall fill with plenty,
and thy presses burst with new wine.
- 11 My son, shrink not from the discipline of
Jehovah,
and be not revolted at His correction.
- 12 For whom Jehovah loves He corrects,
and, as a father, does the son a favor.
- 13 Oh, the blessedness of the man! he has
found wisdom;
yea of the man! he gets discernment.
- 14 For her gains are better than the gains of
silver,
and her increase than choice gold.
- 15 In her very self she is more precious than
pearls;
and all the things thou couldest desire are
not to be compared with her.
- 16 Length of days is in her right hand,
in her left, riches and honor.

CHAP. III.

My son, forget not
my law; but let thine
heart keep my com-
mandments:

2 For length of days,
and long life, and
peace, shall they add to
thee.

3 Let not mercy and
truth forsake thee;
bind them about thy
neck; write them upon
the table of thine heart:
4 So shalt thou find
favor and good under-
standing in the sight
of God and man.

5 Trust in the LORD
with all thine heart;
and lean not unto thine
own understanding.

6 In all thy ways ac-
knowledge him, and he
shall direct thy paths.

7 Be not wise in
thine own eyes: fear
the LORD and depart
from evil.

8 It shall be health
to thy navel, and mar-
row to thy bones.

9 Honor the LORD
with thy substance,
and with the first-fruits
of all thine increase:

10 So shall thy barns
be filled with plenty,
and thy presses shall
burst out with new
wine.

11 My son, despise
not the chastening of
the LORD, neither be
weary of his correc-
tion:

12 For whom the
LORD loveth he cor-
recteth, even as a fa-
ther the son in whom
he delighteth.

13 Happy is the man
that findeth wisdom,
and the man that get-
teth understanding:

14 For the merchan-
dice of it is better than
the merchandise of sil-
ver, and the gain there-
of than fine gold.

15 She is more pre-
cious than rubies: and
all the things thou
canst desire are not to
be compared unto her.

16 Length of days is
in her right hand; and
in her left hand riches
and honour.

¹⁷ Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

¹⁸ She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her.

¹⁹ The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens.

²⁰ By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.

²¹ My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion:

²² So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck.

²³ Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble.

²⁴ When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid; yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.

²⁵ Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh.

²⁶ For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.

²⁷ withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.

²⁸ Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and tomorrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.

²⁹ Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee.

³⁰ Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm.

³¹ Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.

³² For the froward is abomination to the Lord: but his secret is with the righteous.

¹⁷ Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths prosperity.

¹⁸ In her very self she is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and each is led straight of them that have her by the hand.

¹⁹ Jehovah by wisdom founded the earth, setting firm the heavens by discernment.

²⁰ By His knowledge the deeps are cloven up, and the clouds drop down the dew.

²¹ My son, suffer not to pass from thine eyes, watch, what is stable and well-considered;

²² and they shall be life to thy soul and grace to thy neck.

²³ Then shalt thou walk thy road safely and thy foot shall not stumble.

²⁴ If thou shalt lie down, thou shalt not be afraid; yea, thou dost lie down and thy sleep is sweet.

²⁵ Be not afraid of sudden fear, nor of the destruction of the wicked, because it is actually coming in.

²⁶ For Jehovah shall be as loins to thee, and guard thy foot from being taken.

²⁷ Withhold not good from the rightful subject of it, when it is in the power of thy hand to do.

²⁸ Say not to thy neighbor, Go and come again and to-morrow I will give; and thou hast means at the time.

²⁹ Be not silent with thy neighbor as to an evil, and he dwelling trustfully with thee.

³⁰ Thou shalt not quarrel with a man to no purpose; verily, he has already done thee mischief.

³¹ Do not become excited about a rapacious man, and do not choose any of his ways;

³² for he who is bent out of his course is an abomination to Jehovah, but with the straightforward is His secret counsel.

- 33 The curse of Jehovah is in the house of the wicked; but the resting place of the righteous is blessed.
- 34 If scoffers are in question, He Himself will scoff, but if the humble, He will bestow favor.
- 35 Glory, wise men inherit; but fools are each piling shame.

33 The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just.

34 Surely he scorneth the scorner: but he giveth grace unto the lowly.

35 The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools.

CHAPTER IV.

- 1 Hear, ye children, the admonition of a father, and attend so as to learn discernment;
- 2 for a good lesson is that I give you; my direction forsake ye not.
- 3 For I became a son to my father, gentle and alone in the regard of my mother.
- 4 And he directed me and said to me;— Let thy heart take hold of my words; keep watch over my commandments and live.
- 5 Get wisdom; get discernment; forget not; and turn not thou away from the speeches of my mouth.
- 6 Forsake her not, and she shall guard thee. Love her, and she shall stand sentry over thee.
- 7 As the height of wisdom get wisdom; and by means of all thy getting get discernment.
- 8 Exalt her, and she shall promote thee. She shall load thee with honor because thou dost embrace her.
- 9 She shall give to thy head a garland of grace; as a crown of glory shall she serve for thee.
- 10 Hear, O my son, and take my words, and they shall grow greater to thee thro' years of life.
- 11 I have directed thee in the way of wisdom; I have guided thee in level paths.

CHAP. IV.
HEAR, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.

2 For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.

3 For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother.

4 He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live.

5 Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.

6 Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee.

7 Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.

8 Exalt her, and she shall promote thee; she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her.

9 She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.

10 Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings: and the years of thy life shall be many.

11 I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths.

- ¹² When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.
- ¹³ Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go; keep her; for she is thy life.
- ¹⁴ Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.
- ¹⁵ Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.
- ¹⁶ For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.
- ¹⁷ For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.
- ¹⁸ But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.
- ¹⁹ The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble.
- ²⁰ My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.
- ²¹ Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.
- ²² For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.
- ²³ Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.
- ²⁴ Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.
- ²⁵ Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.
- ²⁶ Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.
- ²⁷ Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.
- ¹² When thou walkest, thy step shall not be straitened; and if thou runnest, thou shalt not be made to stumble.
- ¹³ Take fast hold of discipline. Do not let go. Keep watch over her; for she is herself thy life.
- ¹⁴ Enter not by the path of the wicked; and do not attempt straight guidance by the way of evil men.
- ¹⁵ Let that go; do not get on by that; turn off of it; and pass on.
- ¹⁶ For the mere reason that they sleep not, rest assured they do mischief, and that their sleep is stolen, rest assured they occasion stumbling.
- ¹⁷ For they feed on food of wickedness, and drink wine of wrongs.
- ¹⁸ But the path of the righteous is as dawning light, advancing and brightening toward perfect day.
- ¹⁹ The way of the wicked is as darkness. They know not by what they are made to stumble.
- ²⁰ My son, attend to my words; bend thine ear to my speeches.
- ²¹ Let them not get away from thine eyes; guard them in the midst of thine heart;
- ²² for they are life to them that find them, and healing to all their flesh.
- ²³ More than any guard-post keep watch over thine heart; for out of it are the outgoings of life.
- ²⁴ Remove from thee crookedness of mouth, and swerving lips put far from thee.
- ²⁵ Let thine eyes look right on, and thine eyelids be level before thee.
- ²⁶ Make smooth the planting-place of thy foot; and all thy ways shall be established firmly.
- ²⁷ Turn not to the right or to the left. Remove thy foot from evil.

CHAPTER V.

- 1 My son, attend to my wisdom;
to my discernment bend down thine ear.
2 To guard deep counsels
and knowledge, let them mount guard over
thy lips.
3 For the lips of a strange woman distil
honey;
and her mouth is smoother than oil;
4 but her end bitter as wormwood;
sharp as the edges of a sword.
5 Her feet go down to death.
Her steps take hold of Sheol.
6 Lest she should lay smooth the path of
life,
her tracks are shifting. She does not get
to know.
7 And now, ye children, hearken unto me;
and turn not from the words of my
mouth.
8 Let thy way be far off from her;
and approach not the door of her house;
9 lest thou give thy powers to others,
and thy years to the cruel;
10 lest strangers be filled with thy strength,
and thy hard toils be in the house of a
stranger;
11 and thou groan in thine after lot,
when thy flesh and thy roundness are
consumed,
12 and say, How have I hated admonition,
and my heart despised reproof,
13 and I not heard the voice of them that
directed me,
nor to my teachers inclined mine ear!
14 I soon became like any wicked man
in the midst of the congregation and as-
sembly.
15 Drink waters out of thine own cistern;
Yea, running waters from within thine own
well.
16 Let thy fountains overflow abroad;
as streams of water in the open squares.

CHAP. V.

My son, attend unto
my wisdom, and bow
thine ear to my under-
standing;

2 That thou mayest
regard discretion, and
that thy lips may keep
knowledge.

3 For the lips of a
strange woman drop as
an honey-comb, and
her mouth is smoother
than oil:

4 But her end is bit-
ter as wormwood, sharp
as a two-edged sword.

5 Her feet go down
to death; her steps
take hold on hell.

6 Lest thou shouldest
ponder the path of life,
her ways are moveable,
that thou canst not
know them.

7 Hear me now there-
fore, O ye children, and
depart not from the
words of my mouth.

8 Remove thy way
far from her, and come
not nigh the door of her
house;

9 Lest thou give thine
honour unto others,
and thy years unto the
cruel;

10 Lest strangers be
filled with thy wealth,
and thy labours be in
the house of a stranger:

11 And thou mourn
at the last, when thy
flesh and thy body are
consumed,

12 And say, How
have I hated instruc-
tion, and my heart des-
pised reproof;

13 And have not
obeyed the voice of my
teachers, nor inclined
mine ear to them that
instructed me!

14 I was almost in all
evil in the midst of the
congregation and as-
sembly.

15 Drink waters out
of thine own cistern,
and running waters out
of thine own well.

16 Let thy fountains
be dispersed abroad
and rivers of water in
the streets.

17 Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee.

18 Let thy fountain be blessed ; and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.

19 Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe ; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times, and be thou ravished always with her love!

20 And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?

21 For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.

22 His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.

23 He shall die without instruction ; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

17 Let them be for thyself alone, and for no strangers with thee.

18 Let thy fountain be blessed ; and have joy from the wife of thy youth.

19 A loving hind and graceful ibex, let her breasts satisfy thee at all times ; and be thou always insane with her love.

20 And why, my son, be insane over a strange woman,

and embrace the bosom of an alien ?

21 For directly in God's sight are the ways of a man ; and all his paths He levels down.

22 His very iniquities trap him, if he be a wicked man ; and he is holden by the cords of his sin.

23 In his very self he dies for lack of discipline ; and by the greatness of his folly is he made insane.

CHAP. VI.

1 My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger,

2 Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth.

3 Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend ; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend.

4 Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids.

5 Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.

6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard ; consider her ways, and be wise :

7 Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,

CHAPTER VI.

1 My son, if thou art under surety to thy friend, thou hast stricken thy hand for a stranger.

2 Thou art snared by the speeches of thy mouth. Thou hast been caught by the speeches of thy mouth.

3 Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself ; for thou hast come into the hand of thy friend :— Go cast thyself under foot, and importune thy friend.

4 Give not sleep to thine eyes, or drowsy heaviness to thine eyelids.

5 Get snatched as a roe from the hand ; yea, as a bird from the hand of the ensnarer.

6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard ; see her ways, and be wise :

7 who, having no counsellor, director, or ruler,

- 8 lays up her food in the summer,
yea, through harvest has gathered what
she is to eat.
- 9 How long wilt thou lie, O sluggard?
When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?
- 10 A little sleep! A little drowsing!
A little folding of the hands to rest!
- 11 So comes thy poverty like one that travels;
and thy want like an armed man.
- 12 A worthless man; a man utterly in vain;
walking in crookedness of mouth;
- 13 talking with his eyes; speaking with his
feet;
motioning with his fingers;
- 14 with upturnings in his heart; fabricating
evil;
will be putting forth grounds of quarrel all
the time.
- 15 Wherefore his crushing shall come sud-
denly;
at a stroke shall he be broken, and there
be no remedy.
- 16 These six things Jehovah hates;
yea, seven are an abomination to His very
soul:—
- 17 Lofty eyes; a lying tongue;
and hands that shed innocent blood;
- 18 a heart fabricating empty devices;
feet that run swift to evil;
- 19 a deceived witness whose breath is lies;
and he that puts grounds of quarrel among
brethren.
- 20 Keep watch, my son, of thy father's com-
mandment,
and repel not what thy mother directs.
- 21 Bind them upon thine heart forever;
tie them about thy neck.
- 22 When thou walkest, she shall lead thee;
when thou liest down, she shall guard thee;
and when thou wakest up, she shall be
herself communing with thee.
- 23 For the commandment is a lamp, and what
is directed is a light;
and in the way of life is admonitory dis-
cipline;
- 8 Provideth her meat
in the summer, *and*
gathereth her food in
the harvest.
- 9 How long wilt thou
sleep, O sluggard?
when, wilt thou arise
out of thy sleep?
- 10 Yet a little sleep,
a little slumber, a little
folding of the hands to
sleep:
- 11 So shall thy pov-
erty come as one that
travelleth, *and* thy
want as an armed man.
- 12 A naughty person,
a wicked man, walketh
with a froward mouth.
- 13 He winketh with
his eyes, he speaketh
with his feet, he teach-
eth with his fingers;
- 14 Frowardness *is* in
his heart, he deviseth
mischief continually;
he soweth discord.
- 15 Therefore shall
his calamity come sud-
denly; suddenly shall
he be broken without
remedy.
- 16 These six *things*
doth the Lord hate;
yea, seven *are* an ab-
omination unto him;
- 17 A proud look, a
lying tongue, *and* d
hands that shed innocent
blood;
- 18 An heart that de-
viseth wicked imagin-
ations, feet that be swift
in running to mischief;
- 19 A false witness
that speaketh lies, and
him *that* soweth dis-
cord among brethren.
- 20 My son, keep thy
father's command-
ment, and forsake not
the law of thy mother.
- 21 Bind them con-
tinually upon thine
heart, *and* tie them
about thy neck.
- 22 When thou goest,
it shall lead thee; when
thou sleepest, it shall
keep thee; and when
thou awakest, it shall
talk with thee.
- 23 For the com-
mandment *is* a lamp; and
the law *is* light; and
reproofs of instruction
are the way of life:

24 To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman.

25 Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids.

26 For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread; and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life.

27 Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt?

28 Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt?

29 So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent:

30 Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry:

31 But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house.

32 But whose committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.

33 A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away.

34 For jealousy is the rage of a man; therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.

35 He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts.

CHAP. VII.

My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee.

2 Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye.

3 Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the tablet of thine heart.

24 to guard thee from the Woman of Evil; from the flattery of an alien tongue.

25 Lust not after her beauty in thy heart; and let her not trap thee with her eyelids.

26 For after a woman selling herself as low as for a loaf of bread,

and she a man's wife, a precious soul will hunt.

27 Can a man shovel fire into his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt?

28 Can a man walk on coals, and his feet not have the deep brand?

29 So shall he be who goes in to his neighbor's wife.

Whoso touches her shall not go unpunished.

30 Men do not turn adrift a thief because he steals

to fill his appetite because he is hungry;

31 but caught, he must pay sevenfold; he must give all the substance of his house.

32 The adulterous debaucher of a woman is absolutely senseless.

He who would destroy himself, is the man to do just that thing.

33 A wound and dishonor does he get; and his reproach is not wiped away.

34 For jealousy is the rage of a man; and he shall not spare in the day of vengeance.

35 He shall not show favor for any ransom; and he shall not yield because thou swell up the bribe.

CHAPTER VII.

1 My son, watch my words, and thou shalt store my commandments with thee.

2 Guard my commandments and live; and my directions as the apple of thine eyes.

3 Bind them upon thy fingers; write them upon the tablet of thine heart.

- 4 Say unto Wisdom,—Thou art my sister ;
and call Discernment a well-known friend ;
5 to guard thee from the Strange Woman ;
from an alien that makes smooth her words.
6 For in the window of my house,
at my lattice, I looked over,
7 and saw among the simple ones—
I distinguished among the sons—
a young man destitute of sense.
8 Going by in the back street near her cor-
ner,
he will also saunter in the way to her
house ;
9 in the cool; in the evening of the day;
in the very bosom of the night and deep
darkness.
10 And behold a woman to meet him !
exposed as a harlot, but hidden in heart.
11 She is loud and reckless.
Her feet abide not in her house.
12 Now is she in the street; now in the
broad squares;
and she lies in wait at every corner.
13 And she caught him, and kissed him.
She put on a bold face and said to him :—
14 Peace offerings are upon me.
This day I have paid my vows.
15 Therefore went I out to meet thee ;
diligently to seek thy face and find thee.
16 I have spread my couch with coverings
striped with the yarn of Egypt.
17 I have sprinkled my bed
with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.
18 Come, let us drink deep of love until the
morning.
Let us entrance ourselves with amorous
delights.
19 For there is no husband at home.
He is gone a long way.
20 Quite a bundle of the money he took in
his hand.
The day the moon fulls he will come home
again.
21 By her very taking way she bent him.
By the flattery of her lips she drives him
along,

⁴ Say unto wisdom,
Thou art my sister ;
and call understanding
thy kinswoman :
⁵ That they may
keep thee from the
strange woman, from
the stranger which
flattereth with her
words.

⁶ For at the window
of my house I looked
through my casement,

⁷ And beheld among
the simple ones, I dis-
cerned among the
youths, a young man
void of understanding.

⁸ Passing through
the street near her cor-
ner ; and he went the
way to her house,

⁹ In the twilight, in
the evening, in the
black and dark night ;
¹⁰ And, behold, there
met him a woman with
the attire of an harlot,
and subtle of heart.

¹¹ (She is loud and
stubborn ; her feet
abide not in her house :

¹² Now is she with-
out, now in the streets,
and lieth in wait at
every corner.)

¹³ So she caught him,
and kissed him, and
with an impudent face
said unto him,

¹⁴ / have peace-of-
ferings with me ; this
day have I paid my
vows :

¹⁵ Therefore came I
forth to meet thee, dil-
igently to seek thy face ;
and I have found thee.

¹⁶ I have decked my
bed with coverings of
tapestry, with carved
works, with fine linen
of Egypt.

¹⁷ I have perfumed
my bed with myrrh,
aloes, and cinnamon.

¹⁸ Come let us take
our fill of love until the
morning ; let us solace
ourselves with loves.

¹⁹ For the goodman
is not at home, he is
gone a long journey ;

²⁰ He hath taken a
bag of money with him,
and will come home at
the day appointed.

²¹ With her much
fair speech she caused
him to yield, with the
flattery of her lips she
forced him

22 He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks;

23 Till a dart strike through his liver ; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.

24 Harken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth:

25 Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths :

26 For she hath cast down many wounded ; yea, many strong men have been slain by her.

27 Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

CHAP. VIII.

DOTH not wisdom cry ? and understanding put forth her voice ?

2 She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths,

3 She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors ;

4 Unto you, O men, I call ; and my voice is to the sons of man.

5 O ye simple, understanding wisdom ; and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.

6 Hear, for I will speak of excellent things ; and the opening of my lips shall be right things.

7 For my mouth shall speak truth ; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips.

8 All the words of my mouth are in righteousness ; there is nothing froward or perverse in them.

9 They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.

22 starting after her suddenly as an ox enters to the slaughter, and as a chain for the punishment of a fool ;

23 till a dart strike through his liver ; as a bird hastens to the net, and knows not that he is in its very throat.

24 And now, ye children, hearken unto me ; and attend to the speeches of my mouth.

25 Let not thy heart go aside into her ways ; nor do thou stray into her paths.

26 For mighty men, when polluted, she has hurled down ; and strong men were all her slain.

27 The ways to Sheol are at her house descending to the chambers of death.

CHAPTER VIII.

1 Does not Wisdom call ? and Discernment give forth her voice ?

2 At high points in the road she stands ; at home among the paths.

3 By the side of gates ; at a city's mouth ; at the entrance of doors she utters her cry :—

4 To you, O men, I call ; and my voice is to the sons of man.

5 Make subtlety really discerning, O ye simple ones ; and ye stupid ones, give true discernment to the heart.

6 Hear, for I will speak obvious things ; and what is opened by my lips shall be plain matters.

7 For my mouth even mutters truth ; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips.

8 All the words of my mouth are in righteousness.

There is nothing twisted or crooked in them.

9 They are all plain to him that can give a meaning, and level to them that find knowledge.

- 10 Take my discipline, and not silver;
and knowledge rather than choice gold;
11 for wisdom is better than pearls;
and all the things that can be desired are
not to be compared with it.
- 12 I, Wisdom, have made a dwelling of subtlety,
and find the knowledge of deep devices.
- 13 The fear of Jehovah is the hatred of evil.
Pride and arrogance and the evil way
and an upturning mouth have I hated.
- 14 Counsel is mine, and something stable.
I am discernment. I have strength.
- 15 By me kings reign,
and rulers decree righteousness.
- 16 By me princes rule, and nobles;
yea, all the judges of the earth.
- 17 I love them that love me;
and those that seek me earnestly shall find
me.
- 18 Riches and honor are with me;
durable ease and righteousness.
- 19 My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine
gold;
and my increase than choice silver.
- 20 In the way of righteousness I walk;
in the midst of the paths of judgment.
- 21 So results a heritage to them that love me;
and I fill full their treasures.
- 22 Jehovah got possession of me as the first
of His way;
before His works of old.
- 23 I was anointed from everlasting; from the
beginning;
or ever the earth was.
- 24 When there were no deeps I was brought
forth;
when there were no fountains heavy with
waters.
- 25 Before the mountains were sunk fast;
before the hills was I brought forth.
- 26 Even when He had not made the land or
the parts beyond
or the beginning of the dust of the world.
- 27 When He set up the heavens I was there;
when He fixed a vault over the face of the
deep;

to receive my in-
struction, and not sil-
ver; and knowledge
rather than choice gold.

11 For wisdom is bet-
ter than rubies; and
all the things that are
to be desired are not to
be compared to it.

12 I wisdom dwell
with prudence, and find
out knowledge of witty
inventions.

13 The fear of the
Lord is to hate evil:
pride and arrogance and
the evil way and the frow-
ward mouth do I hate.

14 Counsel is mine,
and sound wisdom: I
am understanding; I
have strength.

15 By me kings reign,
and princes decree just-
ice.

16 By me princes
rule and nobles, even all
the judges of the earth.

17 I love them that
love me; and those
that seek me early shall
find me.

18 Riches and honour
are with me; yea, dur-
able riches and right-
eousness.

19 My fruit is better
than gold, yea, than
fine gold; and my re-
venue than choice silver.

20 I lead in the way
of righteousness, in the
midst of the paths of
judgment;

21 That I may cause
those that love me to
inherit substance; and
I will fill their treasures.

22 The Lord pos-
sessed me in the begin-
ning of his way, before
his works of old.

23 I was set up from
everlasting, from the
beginning, or ever the
earth was.

24 When there were
no depths, I was
brought forth; when
there were no fountains
abounding with water.

25 Before the mount-
ains were settled; be-
fore the hills was I
brought forth:

26 While as yet he
had not made the earth,
nor the fields, nor the
highest part of the dust
of the world.

27 When he prepared
the heavens, I was
there; when he set a
compass upon the face
of the depth:

²⁸ When he established the clouds above; when he strengthened the fountains of the deep;

²⁹ When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment; when he appointed the foundations of the earth;

³⁰ Then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;

³¹ Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth: and my delights were with the sons of men.

³² Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways.

³³ Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not.

³⁴ Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.

³⁵ For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD.

³⁶ But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.

CHAP. IX.

WISDOM hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars;

² She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table;

³ She hath sent forth her maidens; she crieth upon the highest places of the city,

⁴ Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,

⁵ Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.

⁶ Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.

- ²⁸ when He strengthened the clouds above; when He settled firmly the fountains of the deep;
- ²⁹ when He gave the sea her decree, that the waters should not run over her mouth; when He decreed foundations for the earth.
- ³⁰ And I became a builder at His side. And I became a deep pleasure day by day; a joy in His sight all the time;
- ³¹ a joy in the habitable part of His earth; and my deep pleasures were for the sons of man.
- ³² Now, therefore, hearken unto me, O ye sons; and blessed are they that watch my ways.
- ³³ Hearken to discipline, and be wise; and do not ye let go.
- ³⁴ Blessed is the man who hearkens unto me, so as to lurk at my gates day after day; so as to watch at the posts of my doors;
- ³⁵ for he that finds me has found me life, and is bringing out favor from Jehovah.
- ³⁶ But he that misses me, wrongs himself. All that hate me, have fallen in love with death.

CHAPTER IX.

- ¹ Wisdom has builded her house. She has hewed out her seven pillars.
- ² She has killed her killing. She has mingled her wine. She has also spread her table.
- ³ She has sent forth her maidens. She calls on the tops of the high places of the city:—
- ⁴ Whoso is simple let him turn this way. As for him that lacks sense, she says to him:—
- ⁵ Come eat of my food, and drink of the wine that I have mingled.
- ⁶ Forsake the simple and live; and go straight in the way of discernment.

- 7 He that disciplines a scorner brings down upon him shame ; and he that reproves a wicked man his disgrace.
- 8 Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee. Reprove a wise man, and he will love thee.
- 9 Impart to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser. Teach a righteous man, and he will make still higher acquisitions.
- 10 The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom ; and the knowledge of holy things is discernment.
- 11 For by me thy days shall become great ; and they shall make thee greater through years of life.
- 12 If thou art wise, thou art wise for thyself ; and if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.
- 13 The Woman of Folly is clamorous. She is simple, and knows nothing whatever.
- 14 And she sits at the door of her house on a seat in the high places of the city, to call those who are passing on the way, who are attempting straight paths ;—
- 15 Whoso is simple let him turn in hither ; yea, he who lacks sense. And she says to him :—
- 16 Stolen waters are sweet ; and food in secret is pleasant.
- 17 And he knows not that the shades are there ; and that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

CHAPTER X.

I PROVERBS OF SOLOMON.

Let a wise son make a glad father ; and let a foolish son be the grief of his mother.

2 Of no profit are treasures of wickedness ; but righteousness delivers from death.

7 He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame ; and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot.

8 Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee : rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.

9 Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser ; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.

10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ; and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding.

11 For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased.

12 If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself ; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.

13 A foolish woman is clamorous ; she is simple, and knoweth nothing.

14 For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city,

15 To call passengers who go right on their ways :

16 Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither : and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,

17 Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.

18 But he knoweth not that the dead are there ; and that her guests are in the depths of hell.

CHAP. X.

THE Proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father ; but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

2 Treasures of wickedness profit nothing : but righteousness delivereth from death.

³ The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish : but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.

⁴ He becometh poor that dealeth *with* a slack hand : but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.

⁵ He that gathereth in summer is a wise son : but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.

⁶ Blessings *are* upon the head of the just : but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

⁷ The memory of the just *is* blessed : but the name of the wicked shall rot.

⁸ The wise in heart will receive commandments : but a prating fool shall fall.

⁹ He that walketh uprightly walketh surely : but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.

¹⁰ He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow : but a prating fool shall fall.

¹¹ The mouth of a righteous man *is* a well of life : but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

¹² Hatred stirreth up strife : but love covereth all sins.

¹³ In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found : but a rod *is* for the back of him that is void of understanding.

³ Jehovah will not starve the righteous appetite ; but the craving of the wicked He will thrust away.

⁴ He is poor who acts with a languid hand ; but the hand of the diligent makes riches.

⁵ He that stores in summer, is a prosperous son. He that snores in harvest, is a son to bring shame.

⁶ Blessings are for the head of the righteous man ; but wrong covers the mouth of the wicked.

⁷ The memory of the righteous man is a blessing ; but the name of the wicked rots.

⁸ He of the wise heart shall lift away the commandments ; and he of the foolish lips shall be the one entangled.

⁹ He that walks in integrity, walks securely ; but he that makes his ways crooked, shall be made to know it.

¹⁰ He of the lowering eye shall give sorrow, and he of the foolish lips shall be the one entangled.

¹¹ A fountain of life is the mouth of a righteous man ; but wrong covers the mouth of the wicked.

¹² Hatred stirs old quarrels ; but love covers all sins.

¹³ Through the lips of the discerning wisdom is found ; but a rod for the back of the senseless man.

- 14 The wise store away knowledge ;
but the mouth of the fool early ruin.
- 15 The wealth of the rich is his strong city.
The destruction of the poor is their poverty.
- 16 The labor of a righteous man serves as life ;
the gains of a wicked man as a sin-offering.
- 17 He that watches admonition is a path to life ;
but he that lets go reproof puts others astray.
- 18 He that hides hatred with lying lips
but puts forth slander, is himself the fool.
- 19 In a multitude of words trespasses never
cease ;
but he that restrains his lips, prospers.
- 20 Choice silver is the tongue of a righteous
man.
The heart of the wicked is as a scrap.
- 21 The lips of a wise man feed many ;
but fools die for want of heart.
- 22 The blessing of Jehovah that itself makes
wealth ;
and He adds no sorrow with it.
- 23 As a jest to a fool is the execution of a
purpose ;
but it is wisdom to a discerning man.
- 24 What the wicked man dreads comes of its
own nature upon him ;
and a desire of righteous men shall he
gratify.
- 25 There is as the coming up of a whirlwind,
and the wicked is no more ;
but the righteous is an eternal foundation.
- 26 As vinegar to the teeth and as smoke to
the eyes,
so is the sluggard to them that send him
forth.
- 14 Wise men lay up
knowledge : but the
mouth of the foolish is
near destruction.
- 15 The rich man's
wealth is his strong
city : the destruction
of the poor is their pov-
erty.
- 16 The labour of the
righteous tendeth to
life : the fruit of the
wicked to sin.
- 17 He is in the way
of life that keepeth
instruction : but he
that refuseth reproach
erreth.
- 18 He that hideth
hatred with lying lips,
and he that uttereth
a slander, is a fool.
- 19 In the multitude
of words there wanteth
not sin : but he that
refraineth his lips is
wise.
- 20 The tongue of the
just is as choice silver :
the heart of the wicked
is little worth.
- 21 The lips of the
righteous feed many :
but fools die for want
of wisdom.
- 22 The blessing of
the LORD, it maketh
rich, and he addeth no
sorrow with it.
- 23 It is as sport to a
fool to do mischief :
but a man of under-
standing hath wisdom.
- 24 The fear of the
wicked, it shall come
upon him : but the de-
sire of the righteous
shall be granted.
- 25 As the whirlwind
passeth, so is the wicked
no more : but the
righteous is an ever-
lasting foundation.
- 26 As vinegar to the
teeth, and as smoke to
the eyes, so is the slug-
gard to them that send
him.

²⁷ The fear of the Lord prolongeth days : but the years of the wicked shall be shortened.

²⁸ The hope of the righteous shall be gladness : but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.

²⁹ The way of the Lord is strength to the upright : but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.

³⁰ The righteous shall never be removed : but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.

³¹ The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom : but the froward tongue shall be cut out.

³² The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable : but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness.

CHAP. XI.

A FALSE balance is abomination to the Lord : but a just weight is his delight.

² When pride cometh, then cometh shame : but with the lowly is wisdom.

³ The integrity of the upright shall guide them : but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.

⁴ Riches profit not in the day of wrath : but righteousness delivereth from death.

⁵ The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way : but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.

27 The fear of Jehovah makes great days ; but the years of the wicked shall be made little.

28 The hope of the righteous turns to joy ; while the confidence of the wicked perishes.

29 The way of Jehovah is a fortress to the upright, but ruin to the workers of iniquity.

30 The righteous man shall not be moved forever : but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.

31 The mouth of the righteous blooms forth wisdom : but the upturning tongue shall be cut out.

32 The lips of the righteous man are instinct with kindness : but the mouth of the wicked with subversive things.

CHAPTER XI.

1 False balances are an abomination to Jehovah : but a full stone is His delight.

2 Has pride entered ? then enters shame ; but with the lowly is wisdom.

3 The integrity of the upright leads them : but the slipperiness of the spoilers makes themselves also a spoil.

4 Wealth profits not in the day of wrath : but righteousness delivers from death.

5 The righteousness of the man of integrity levels his way : but the wicked shall fall by his wickedness.

- 6 The righteousness of the upright delivers them : but by desire are the treacherous taken.
- 7 By the death of a wicked man hope is lost ; and the expectation of sorrowing ones is lost already.
- 8 The righteous is delivered from distress : and the wicked comes into his room.
- 9 By the mouth the ungodly destroys his neighbour : but by knowledge the righteous are delivered.
- 10 By the good of the righteous a city exults ; and by the perishing of the wicked there is a cry of joy.
- 11 By the blessing of the righteous a city is lifted up : but by the mouth of the wicked pulled down.
- 12 A heartless man is contemptuous to his neighbor : but a man of discernment is silent.
- 13 He who goes tale-bearing lays open secret counsels : but he who is of a faithful spirit covers up a matter.
- 14 Where there is no helmsmanship a people fall : but by the greatness of a counsellor there is salvation.
- 15 The evil man does ill because he is surety for a stranger : but a hater of sureties is the believer.
- 16 Grace gets hold of glory ; and the violent get hold of riches.
- 6 The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them : but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness.
- 7 When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish ; and the hope of unjust men perisheth.
- 8 The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead.
- 9 An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour : but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.
- 10 When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth ; and when the wicked perish, there is shouting.
- 11 By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted : but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.
- 12 He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour : but a man of understanding holdeth his peace.
- 13 A talebearer revealeth secrets : but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.
- 14 Where no counsel is, the people fall : but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.
- 15 He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it : and he that hateth suretship is sure.
- 16 A gracious woman retaineth honour ; and strong men retain riches.

¹⁷ The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.

¹⁸ The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward.

¹⁹ As righteousness tendeth to life; so he that pursueth evil, pursueth it to his own death.

²⁰ They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the Lord: but such as are upright in their way are his delight.

²¹ Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.

²² As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion.

²³ The desire of the righteous is only good: but the expectation of the wicked is wrath.

²⁴ There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.

²⁵ The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

²⁶ He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.

²⁷ He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.

²⁸ He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

¹⁷ He who manages for his own soul is a man of mercy: and he who afflicts his own flesh is cruel.

¹⁸ A wicked man doing a deceiving work, and he who sows righteousness having a true reward,

¹⁹ thus righteousness is unto life, but he that chases evil does so to his death.

²⁰ An abomination to Jehovah are men crooked in heart: but men of integrity in their way are His delight.

²¹ When hand to hand the wicked shall not go unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be let off.

²² A gold ring in a swine's snout; a fair and tasteless woman.

²³ A wish of the righteous is only good: an assurance of the wicked is wrath.

²⁴ There is that scatters and is yet increased: and there is that keeps more than is right only unto want.

²⁵ The soul that blesses shall be made fat: and he who gives to drink shall himself also have drink given.

²⁶ Him that hoards corn the people curse: but blessing is for the head of him that sells.

²⁷ He who is eager for what is good, hunts up favor: but he who goes in quest of evil, it shall come to him.

²⁸ He that trusts in his riches shall fall himself; but like a leaf shall the righteous put forth.

29 He that troubles his own house, inherits
the wind;
and a fool is servant to the wise in heart.

29 He that troubleth
his own house shall in-
herit the wind; and the
fool shall be servant to
the wise of heart.

30 The fruit of a righteous man is as of a tree
of life:
and one who catches souls is the wise man.

30 The fruit of the
righteous is a tree of
life; and he that win-
neth souls is wise.

31 Behold, the man righteous on earth shall
be recompensed;
because also the wicked and the sinner.

31 Behold, the right-
eous shall be recom-
pensed in the earth;
much more the wicked
and the sinner.

CHAPTER XII.

1 HE that loves discipline, loves knowledge,
and he that hates reproof, is brutish.

Who so loveth in-
struction loveth knowl-
edge: but he that hat-
eth reproof is brutish.

2 A good man draws out favor from Jehovah;
but a man of mere intellect pronounces
Him guilty.

2 A good man ob-
taineth favour of
the Lord: but a man of
wicked devices will he
condemn.

3 A man shall not be set firm by wickedness:
while the root of the righteous shall not be
shaken.

3 A man shall not be
established by wicked-
ness: but the root of
the righteous shall not
be moved.

4 A capable woman is her husband's crown:
and as rottenness in his bones is one that
causes shame.

4 A virtuous woman
is a crown to her hus-
band: but she that
maketh ashamed is as
rotteness in his bones.

5 The plans of the righteous are a judgment:
the helmsmannships of the wicked are a de-
ceit.

5 The thoughts of
the righteous are right:
but the counsels of the
wicked are deceit.

6 The words of the wicked are a lying-in-
wait for blood:
but the mouth of the upright shall deliver
them.

6 The words of the
wicked are to lie in
wait for blood: but the
mouth of the upright
shall deliver them.

7 Be there overthrow to the wicked, there is
nothing of them left:
but the house of the righteous shall stand.

7 The wicked are
overthrown, and are
not: but the house of
the righteous shall
stand.

8 In exact proportion to his shrewdness is a
man applauded:
but a man of crooked sense is a subject of
contempt.

8 A man shall be
commended according
to his wisdom: but he
that is of a pervers'
heart shall be despised

9 He that is despised, and hath a servant, is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread.

10 To a righteous man regardeth the life of his beast : but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

11 He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread : but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding.

12 The wicked desireth the net of evil men : but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit.

13 The wicked is snared by the transgressions of his lips : but the just shall come out of trouble.

14 A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth ; and the recompence of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him.

15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes : but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.

16 A fool's wrath is presently known : but a prudent man covereth shame.

17 He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness : but a false witness deceit.

18 There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword : but the tongue of the wise is health.

19 The lip of truth shall be established forever : but a lying tongue is but for a moment.

9 A man that is little noticed, but is a servant to himself, is better than he who sets himself up for something, and is without food.

10 The righteous takes thought for the life of his very beast : but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

11 He that works his own land shall be satisfied with food : but he that follows after empty people is void of heart.

12 The wicked longs for the prey of evil men ; but the root of the righteous gives to others.

13 In the transgression of the lips is an evil snare : but the righteous gets out of the strait.

14 With the earnings of the mouth of a man of the better sort, the good man will be satisfied : and the reward of the hands of a laboring man he will render to him.

15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes : but he who listens to counsel is wise.

16 A fool, in the day that he is made to know his provocation, also covers over his shame, a wise man.

17 He that breathes forth truth, publishes righteousness : but the deceived witness, delusion.

18 There is that babbles like the piercings of a sword : but the tongue of the wise is healing.

19 The lip of truth shall be kept up forever : but only while I wink the tongue of falsehood.

- 20** Delusion is in the heart of them that plot evil : but for the counsellors of good is joy.
- 21** No calamity happens to the righteous : but the wicked have been filled with evil.
- 22** An abomination of Jehovah are lips of falsehood : but they that practise truth are His delight.
- 23** A subtle man conceals knowledge : but the heart of the stupid promulgates foolishness.
- 24** The hand of the diligent bears rule : but sloth shall be under tribute.
- 25** Is there anxiety in the heart of a man, let him subdue it : and let a good word cheer it away.
- 26** A righteous man guides his neighbour : but the way of the wicked leads their own selves astray.
- 27** One cannot roast laziness as something he has taken in the chase : but a precious treasure of a man is a diligent one.
- 28** In the path of righteousness is life : and the way is a path, not a death.
- 20** Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil : but to the counsellors of peace is joy.
- 21** There shall no evil happen to the just : but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.
- 22** Lying lips are abomination to the Lord : but they that deal truly are his delight.
- 23** A prudent man concealeth knowledge : but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.
- 24** The hand of the diligent shall bear rule : but the slothful shall be under tribute.
- 25** Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop : but a good word maketh it glad.
- 26** The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour : but the way of the wicked seduceth them.
- 27** The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting : but the substance of a diligent man is precious.
- 28** In the way of righteousness is life ; and in the pathway thereof there is no death.

CHAPTER XIII.

- 1** A wise son has listened to a father's discipline : but a scorner to no rebuke.
- 2** Out of the fair earnings of the mouth of a man a good man will get his food : but the appetite of the faithless out of robbery.

A wise son heareth his father's instruction : but a scorner heareth not rebuke.

2 A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth : but the soul of the transgressors shall eat violence.

CHAP. XIII.

³ He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life : but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

⁴ The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing : but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

⁵ A righteous man hateth lying : but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.

⁶ Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way : but wickedness overthroweth the sinner.

⁷ There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing : there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.

⁸ The ransom of a man's life are his riches : but the poor heareth not rebuke.

⁹ The light of the righteous rejoiceth : but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.

¹⁰ Only by pride cometh contention ; but with the well-advised is wisdom.

¹¹ Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished : but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.

¹² Hope deferred maketh the heart sick : but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.

¹³ Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed : but he that searcheth the commandment shall be rewarded.

³ He that sets watch over his mouth, stands guard over his soul : but he that sets wide his lips, it is ruin to him.

⁴ The sluggard longs, but as to his soul has nothing ; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

⁵ A deceiving business hates the righteous man, but also shames and disgraces the wicked.

⁶ Righteousness keeps guard over him that is of integrity in his way : but wickedness subverts the Sin-Offering.

⁷ There is that makes himself rich, and is all nothing. There is that makes himself poor, and is a great treasure.

⁸ The ransom of a man's soul is his wealth ; and a poor man is he who has not listened to rebuke.

⁹ The light of the righteous shall rejoice ; but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out

¹⁰ Only by pride comes quarrel ; but with those that take advice is wisdom.

¹¹ Wealth dwindles faster than the breath ; but he that keeps gathering on the hand increases.

¹² Protracted delay enfeebles the heart ; but the desire arrived at is a tree of life.

¹³ He that despises the word is bound by it ; but he that fears the law, as so doing shall be made whole.

- 14** The direction of a wise man is a burrowing out place of life,
for getting away out of the snares of death.
14 The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.
- 15** Good intelligence gives grace ;
but the way of the faithless is perpetual.
15 Good understanding giveth favour : but the way of the transgressors is hard.
- 16** Every subtle man acts as he knows ;
but the stupid acts out folly.
16 Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge : but a fool layeth open his folly.
- 17** A wicked messenger falls as being an evil ;
but a faithful errand-man is health.
17 A wicked messenger falleth into mischiefe : but a faithful ambassador is health.
- 18** Poverty and shame is he who lets go discipline ;
but he that watches reproof shall be honoured.
18 Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction : but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured.
- 19** A desire that has sprung up, is sweet to the soul ;
but it is abomination to the stupid to turn away from evil.
19 The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul : but it is abomination to fools to depart from evil.
- 20** He that goes with the wise, shall be also wise ;
but the companion of fools shall do badly.
20 He that walketh with wise men shall be wise : but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.
- 21** Evil shall pursue sinners ;
but good shall perfect the righteous.
21 Evil pursueth sinners : but to the righteous good shall be repaid.
- 22** A good man sends down a heritage to children's children ;
but the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the righteous.
22 A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children ; and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.
- 23** Much to eat is the light of the poor ;
but there is that is swept away as not judgment.
23 Much food is in the tillage of the poor : but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment.
- 24** He who spares his rod, hates his son ;
but he who loves him, is earnest after him with discipline.
24 He that spareth his rod hateth his son : but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.
- 25** The righteous eats so that he satisfies his appetite ;
but the belly of the wicked wants.
25 The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul : but the belly of the wicked shall want.

CHAP. XIV.

EVERY wise woman buildeth her house : but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.

2 He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the LORD : but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.

3 In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride ; but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.

4 Where no oxen are, the crib is clean : but much increase is by the strength of the ox.

5 A faithful witness will not lie : but a false witness will utter lies.

6 A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not : but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.

7 Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.

8 The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way ; but the folly of fools is deceit.

9 Fools make a mock at sin : but among the righteous there is favor.

10 The heart knoweth his own bitterness ; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.

11 The house of the wicked shall be overthrown : but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.

CHAPTER XIV.

- 1** The Wise Woman has built her house , and Folly tears it down with her hands.
- 2** He that walks in His level track fears Je-hovah ; but he that is turned out of His way despises Him.
- 3** The mouth of a fool is a sceptre of pride ; but the lips of the wise shall guard them.
- 4** Where no oxen are the stable is clean ; but there is great profit in the strength of an ox.
- 5** He who witnesses things correctly, does not lie ; but, of a deceived witness, the very breath is lies.
- 6** A scorner has sought wisdom, and there was no such thing ; but knowledge is easy to him who has become discerning.
- 7** Go from the presence of a stupid man ; and thou shalt not know the lips of knowledge.
- 8** The wisdom of the subtle is the making discernible of his way ; but the folly of the stupid is delusion.
- 9** Sin makes a mock at fools ; but between upright beings there is favor.
- 10** A knowing heart is a bitterness to itself ; but with its joy it does not hold intercourse as an enemy.
- 11** The house of the wicked shall be made desolate ; but the tent of the upright shall flourish.

- 12 There is a way that seems right unto a man;
but its afterpart is the ways of death.
- 13 Even in laughter a heart is sad ;
and joy, in its afterpart, is heaviness.
- 14 The backslider in heart shall be satisfied
with his ways ;
and the good man from him.
- 15 The simple trusts everything ;
but the subtle must make it discernible
that he is going right.
- 16 The wise is afraid, and departs from evil :
but the stupid push on, and are confident.
- 17 He that has quick passions, does foolishness :
but the man of deep schemes is hated.
- 18 The simple have inherited folly :
but the subtle make a crown of knowledge.
- 19 The evil bow before the good,
and the wicked at the gates of the righteous man.
- 20 The poor is odious even to his neighbor ;
but the lovers of the rich man are many.
- 21 He who despises his neighbor, blunders ;
but he who pities the poor, blessed is he !
- 22 Must they not err that devise evil,
seeing that Mercy and Truth devise good ?
- 23 By all labor there comes a profit ;
but the talk of the lips tends only to want.
- 24 The crown of the wise is their wealth ;
the folly of the stupid is folly.
- 25 A witness of truth saves souls :
but he whose breath is lies, deludes.
- 12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man : but the end thereof are the ways of death.
- 13 Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful ;
and the end of that mirth is heaviness.
- 14 The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways ;
and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.
- 15 The simple believeth every word :
but the prudent man looketh well to his going.
- 16 A wise man fear-
eth, and departeth from evil : but the fool rag-
eth, and is confident.
- 17 He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly ; and a man of wicked devices is hated.
- 18 The simple inherit folly : but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.
- 19 The evil bow before the good ; and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.
- 20 The poor is hated even of his own neighbour : but the rich hath many friends.
- 21 He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth : but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.
- 22 Do they not err that devise evil ? but mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good.
- 23 In all labour there is profit : but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.
- 24 The crown of the wise is their riches : but the foolishness of fools is folly.
- 25 A true witness delivereth souls : but a deceitful witness speaketh lies.

- ²⁶ In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence; and his children shall have a place of refuge.
- ²⁷ The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.
- ²⁸ In the multitude of people is the king's honour; but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince.
- ²⁹ He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.
- ³⁰ A sound heart is the life of the flesh; but envy the rottenness of the bones.
- ³¹ He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.
- ³² The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.
- ³³ Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding: but that which is in the midst of fools is made known.
- ³⁴ Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.
- ³⁵ The king's favour is toward a wise servant; but his wrath is against him that causeth shame.
- 26** In the fear of Jehovah is a strong trust; and to His children it becomes a refuge.
- 27** The fear of Jehovah is where life burrows out in getting away out of the snares of death.
- 28** In a great people is the king's honor; but in the people's coming to nothing the prince's ruin.
- 29** He that is slow to anger, is of great discernment: but he that is quick of spirit, enhances folly.
- 30** A healthy heart is the life of the flesh; but perturbation is the rottenness of the bones.
- 31** He that oppresses the weak, scorns his Maker; but he that honors Him, has pity on the poor.
- 32** The wicked is thrust lower by his evil; but the righteous takes refuge in his very death.
- 33** In a discerning heart wisdom rests quiet; but in the midst of the stupid it is made known.
- 34** Righteousness lifts up a people; and the mercy for nations is the Sin-Offering.
- 35** The kindness of a king is a wise servant; but his wrath becomes one that brings shame.

CHAP. XV.

A SOFT answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

CHAPTER XV.

- i** A soft answer turns away wrath; but a trying word arouses anger.

- 2** The tongue of the wise improves knowledge;
but the mouth of the stupid makes folly pour forth.
- 3** The eyes of Jehovah are in every place taking note of the wicked and the good.
- 4** The tongue, as a healing thing, is a tree of life; but, as a subverting thing, it is ruin like the wind.
- 5** A fool rejects the discipline of his father, but gives him subtlety who keeps watch upon reproof.
- 6** The house of a righteous man is great wealth; but in the revenue of a wicked man is trouble.
- 7** The lips of the wise winnow knowledge; but the heart of the stupid is not fixed.
- 8** The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to Jehovah; but the prayer of the upright is His delight.
- 9** An abomination to Jehovah is a way for the wicked man; but him who is journeying after righteousness He loves.
- 10** Discipline is an evil to him who forsakes the path.
It is in hating reproof he dies.
- 11** Sheol and Destruction are before Jehovah, because also the hearts of the children of men.
- 12** A scorner loves not him that reproves him; neither will he go to the wise.
- 2** The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright; but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.
- 3** The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.
- 4** A wholesome tongue is a tree of life; but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.
- 5** A fool despiseth his father's instruction; but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.
- 6** In the house of the righteous is much treasure; but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.
- 7** The lips of the wise disperse knowledge; but the heart of the foolish doeth not so.
- 8** The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is his delight.
- 9** The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord; but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.
- 10** Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way; and he that hateth reproof shall die.
- 11** Hell and destruction are before the Lord; how much more then the hearts of the children of men?
- 12** A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him; neither will he go unto the wise.

¹³ A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.

¹⁴ The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge; but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.

¹⁵ All the days of the afflicted *are* evil: but he that is of a merry heart *hath* a continual feast.

¹⁶ Better is little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure, and trouble therewith.

¹⁷ Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

¹⁸ A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but *he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.*

¹⁹ The way of the slothful *man is* as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous *is* made plain.

²⁰ A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother.

²¹ Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.

²² Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

²³ A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth; and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!

²⁴ The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.

¹³ A glad heart does good to the countenance; but by grief of heart comes an upbraiding spirit.

¹⁴ A heart, made discerning, seeks knowledge; but the countenance of the stupid feeds on folly.

¹⁵ All the days of the toiling are evil; but a good heart is a continual feast.

¹⁶ Better is a little with the fear of Jehovah, than a great treasure and trouble therewith.

¹⁷ Better is an allowance of vegetables, and love there, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith.

¹⁸ A wrathful man stirs up a ground for quarrel; but one slow to anger quiets contention.

¹⁹ The way of a sluggard is as a hedge of thorns; but the path of the upright is cast up.

²⁰ A wise son will gladden his father; but a fool of a man despises his mother.

²¹ Folly is joy to the heartless man; but a man of discernment makes a direct track.

²² There is a failure of plans where there is no consulting; but by greatness of counsellors each plan succeeds.

²³ A man has joy by the decree of his mouth; and a word in its season, how good it is!

²⁴ The path of life is upward for the wise man because of the turning from Sheol beneath.

- 25** The house of the proud shall Jehovah pull down;
but He keeps fixed the boundary of the widow.
- 26** Plans of evil are the abomination of Jehovah;
but pleasant words are pure.
- 27** He troubles his house who seizes upon prey;
but he who hates bribes, lives.
- 28** A righteous heart thinks in order to decide;
but the mouth of the wicked pours out evils.
- 29** Jehovah is far from the wicked;
but the prayer of the righteous He hears.
- 30** The light of the eyes rejoices the heart.
A good report fattens the bones.
- 31** The ear that hears the reproof of life
abides in the midst of the wise.
- 32** He that lets go admonition, despises himself;
but he that hears reproof, gets possession of heart.
- 33** The fear of Jehovah is the discipline of wisdom;
and before glory is affliction.
- 25** The Lord will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.
- 26** The thoughts of the wicked *are* an abomination to the Lord: but the words of the pure *are* pleasant words.
- 27** He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house: but he that hateth gifts shall live.
- 28** The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.
- 29** The Lord *is* far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.
- 30** The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: and a good report maketh the bones fat.
- 31** The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise.
- 32** He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding.
- 33** The fear of the Lord *is* the instruction of wisdom: and before honour *is* humility.

CHAPTER XVI.

- 1** To man may belong the arrangings of the heart;
but from Jehovah is the decree of the tongue.
- 2** As to all the ways of a man, pure in His own eyes,
while yet He weighs out spirits, is Jehovah.

THE preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, *is* from the Lord.

a All the ways of a man *are* clean in his own eyes: but the Lord weigheth the spirits.

³ Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.

⁴ The Lord hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

⁵ Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

⁶ By mercy and truth iniquity is purged; and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.

⁷ When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

⁸ Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right.

⁹ A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps.

¹⁰ A divine sentence is in the lips of the king; his mouth transgresseth not in judgment.

¹¹ A just weight and balance are the Lord's; all the weights of the bag are his work.

¹² It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness; for the throne is established by righteousness.

¹³ Righteous lips are the delight of kings; and they love him that speaketh right.

³ Roll thy doings in the direction of Jehovah; and they shall have success according to thy plans.

⁴ Jehovah has made everything for His decree; yea, even the wicked man for the day of evil.

⁵ Every one that is proud of heart is an abomination to Jehovah. When hand to hand, he shall not go unpunished.

⁶ By mercy and truth iniquity is covered; and through the fear of Jehovah is the turning from evil.

⁷ Because it pleases Jehovah, the ways of a man, even of His enemies, He sets at peace with Him.

⁸ Better is a little by means of righteousness, than great revenues by that which is not a judgment.

⁹ The heart of a man devises his way; but Jehovah plants his step.

¹⁰ There is a divination on the lips of a king; his mouth is not treacherous in judgment.

¹¹ The balance and scales of judgment are Jehovah's; His work is all the stones of the bag.

¹² It is an abomination to kings to do wickedness; for in righteousness a throne is set firm.

¹³ A pleasure to kings are lips of righteousness; and he who speaks right, is loved.

- 14 The wrath of a king is death's messengers; and a wise man will get it covered. 14 The wrath of a king *is as* messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it.
- 15 In the light of a king's countenance is life; and his favor is as the cloud of the latter rain. 15 In the light of the king's countenance *is* life; and his favour *is* as a cloud of the latter rain.
- 16 To get wisdom, how much better than gold! and to get discernment to be chosen rather than silver! 16 How much better *is it* to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!
- 17 The highway of the upright is the departing from evil. He that guards his soul, watches his way. 17 The highway of the upright *is* to depart from evil; he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.
- 18 Before ruin is pride; and before a fall a haughty spirit. 18 Pride *goeth* before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.
- 19 Better is it to be humble of spirit with the afflicted, than to divide the spoil with the proud. 19 Better *it is to be* of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.
- 20 He that is wise, may, for one act, find good; so he that casts himself on Jehovah, blessed is he! 20 He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good; and whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy *is* he.
- 21 The wise in heart get the name of being discerning: but sweetness of lips makes a lesson better taken. 21 The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.
- 22 A fountain of life is wisdom to him who has any; but the discipline of fools is folly. 22 Understanding *is* a well-spring of life unto him that hath it; but the instruction of fools *is* folly.
- 23 A wise heart gives subtlety to its mouth; and upon its lips makes a lesson to be better taken. 23 The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.
- 24 A flow of honey are words of pleasantness, sweet to the soul, and healing to the bone. 24 Pleasant words *are as* an honey-comb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.
- 25 There is a way that seems right to a man; but its after part are the ways of death. 25 There is a way that seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof *are* the ways of death.
- 26 The laboring soul labors for it; for its mouth imposes it upon him. 26 He that laboureth, laboureth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him.

- 27** An ungodly man digeth up evil ; and in his lips there is as a burning fire.
- 28** A froward man soweth strife ; and a whisperer separateth chief friends.
- 29** A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way that is not good.
- 30** He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things : moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass.
- 31** The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.
- 32** He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty ; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.
- 33** The lot is cast into the lap ; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.

CHAP. XVII.

BETTER is a dry morsel and quietness therewith, than a house full of sacrifices with strife.

2 A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.

3 The fining-pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold : but the LORD trieth the hearts.

4 A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips ; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.

5 Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker ; and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.

- 27** A worthless man, digging up evil, and having upon his lips as it were burning fire,
- 28** as a mischievous man, spreads discord, and, as a talker, separates away a friend ;
- 29** as a man of violence, seduces his neighbour ; and leads him in a way not good.
- 30** Shutting his eyes to devise mischiefs, pressing his lips, he has already accomplished evil.
- 31** Grey hair, to be a crown of glory, must be found in the way of righteousness.
- 32** He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty ; and he that rules his spirit, than he that takes a city.
- 33** The lot is cast into the lap ; but its whole judgment is from Jehovah.

CHAPTER XVII.

- 1** Better is a dry morsel and quietness therewith, than a house full of contentious feasts.
- 2** A wise servant shall have rule over the son of one who causes shame, and in the very midst of the brethren shall share the inheritance.
- 3** The fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold, and Jehovah as trier of hearts.
- 4** An evil doer gives heed to a worthless lip. A lie listens to a reckless tongue.
- 5** He that mocks the poor man, scorns his Maker. He that is glad of calamity, shall not go unpunished.

- 6 The crown of old men are children's children;
and the glory of children are their fathers. | 6 Children's children
are the crown of old
men; and the glory of
children *are* their fa-
thers.
- 7 Excellent speech is not agreeable to the base,
for the same reason also that lying speech
is not to the noble. | 7 Excellent speech
becometh not a fool;
much less do lying lips
a prince.
- 8 The Gift is a precious stone in the eyes of
him who has it:
whithersoever it turns it prospers. | 8 A gift *is as* a pre-
cious stone in the eyes
of him that hath it;
whithersoever it turn-
eth, it prospereth.
- 9 He that covers sin, seeks love;
but he who falls back into an act, drives
away a friend. | 9 He that covereth a
transgression, seeketh
love; but he that re-
peateth a matter separ-
ateth *very* friends.
- 10 Rebuke penetrates further into a discern-
ing man
than a hundred stripes into a stupid one. | 10 A reproof enter-
eth more into a wise
man than an hundred
stripes into a fool.
- 11 Only rebellion goes in search of evil,
and has a cruel messenger sent by its very
self. | 11 An evil man seek-
eth only rebellion;
therefore a cruel mes-
senger shall be sent
against him.
- 12 Let a bear robbed of her cubs meet a man;
but not a fool his folly. | 12 Let a bear robbed
of her whelps meet a
man, rather than a fool
in his folly.
- 13 Whoso returns evil for good,
evil shall not depart from his house. | 13 Whoso rewardeth
evil for good, evil shall
not depart from his
house.
- 14 A breaker of a way for waters is the begin-
ning of strife;
therefore break off contention before it
pours forth. | 14 The beginning of
strife *is as* when one
letteth out water;
therefore leave off con-
tentio[n], before it be
meddled with.
- 15 He who makes the wicked righteous, and
he who makes the righteous wicked,
even both of them are an abomination to
Jehovah. | 15 He that justifieth
the wicked, and he that
condemneth the just,
even they both *are*
abomination to the
LORD.
- 16 Why is this?—a price in the hand of a
stupid man
to get wisdom; and no heart? | 16 Wherefore *is there*
a price in the hand of a
fool to get wisdom, see-
ing *he hath no heart*
to it?
- 17 At all times the Friend loves;
and a brother is born for straitness. | 17 A friend loveth at
all times, and a brother
is born for adversity.

¹⁸ A man void of understanding striketh hands, *and* becometh surety in the presence of his friend.

¹⁹ He loveth transgression that loveth strife; *and* he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction.

²⁰ He that hath a forward heart findeth no good; *and* he that bath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief.

²¹ He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his sorrow; *and* the father of a fool hath no joy.

²² A merry heart doeth good like a medicine; *but* a broken spirit drieth the bones.

²³ A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.

²⁴ Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; *but* the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.

²⁵ A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.

²⁶ Also to punish the just is not good, *nor* to strike princes for equity.

²⁷ He that hath knowledge sparingth his words; *and* a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.

²⁸ Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise; *and* he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.

¹⁸ A man without sense strikes hands, assuming over again a suretyship in the very presence of his Friend.

¹⁹ He loves sin that loves contention; *and* he that sets high his gate, seeks ruin.

²⁰ The crooked in heart cannot find good; *and* he that is subversive in his tongue, must fall as being an evil.

²¹ When one has a stupid child it is his sorrow; *and* he is not glad who is father of the base.

²² A glad heart helps forward a cure; *but* an upbraiding spirit dries the bones.

²³ A gift out of the bosom the wicked has to take
to turn the paths of judgment.

²⁴ Before the very face of the discerning is wisdom;
but the eyes of the stupid are at the end of the earth.

²⁵ A vexation to a father is a stupid son,
and a grief to her who bare him.

²⁶ Even deserved punishment to the righteous does not seem good
when designed to chasten the willing with a view to holiness.

²⁷ He that restrains his words, knows knowledge;
and he that is cool in spirit, is a discerning man.

²⁸ Even a fool is counted wise if he hold his peace;
a man of discernment, if he shut his lips.

CHAPTER XVIII.

- 1 The aims of a man left to himself are at the mere dictate of desire; against everything stable he lets himself roll along.
- 2 The stupid has no delight in discernment, but in his heart's acting itself out.
- 3 When the wicked enters, there enters also contemptuousness; and with disgrace, reproachfulness.
- 4 Deep waters are the words of a man's mouth; a gushing stream is the fountain of wisdom.
- 5 Partiality to a wicked man is not good, to the turning aside of the righteous in judgment.
- 6 The lips of a stupid man come into a quarrel; and it is his mouth that gives a name to blows.
- 7 The mouth of a stupid man is ruin to himself; and his lips are a snare to his soul.
- 8 The words of a talker are as dainty morsels, and, as such, go down to the very chambers of the belly.
- 9 Even he who discourages himself in his duty is the very brother of him who is a master of destruction.
- 10 The name of Jehovah is a tower of strength; the righteous runs into it, and is lifted high.

3*

CHAP. XVIII.

THROUGH desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom.

2 A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.

3 When the wicked cometh, then cometh also contempt, and with ignominy re-proach.

4 The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the well-spring of wisdom as a flowing brook.

5 It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment.

6 A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.

7 A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.

8 The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

9 He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.

10 The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

¹¹ The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own con- ceit.

¹² Before destruction the heart of man is haughty; and before honour is humility.

¹³ He that answer- eth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.

¹⁴ The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?

¹⁵ The heart of the prudent getteth knowl- edge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowl- edge.

¹⁶ A man's gift mak- eth room for him, and bringeth him before great men.

¹⁷ He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.

¹⁸ The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty.

¹⁹ A brother offend- ed is harder to be won than a strong city; and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.

²⁰ A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled.

²¹ Death and life are in the power of the tongue; and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

¹¹ The competency of a rich man is the city of his strength; and as a high wall in his imagination.

¹² Before ruin the heart of man is lofty; and before honor is humiliation.

¹³ He that answers a thing before he listens; it is folly itself to him, and also shame.

¹⁴ The spirit of a man may control his sick- ness; but a spirit of upbraiding—who can carry that?

¹⁵ A heart made discerning gains in knowl- edge; and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.

¹⁶ The gift of a plain man makes room for him, and brings him before the great.

¹⁷ He who is righteous as first in his own quarrel shall have his neighbor come and search him.

¹⁸ The lot quiets contentions, and parts the mighty.

¹⁹ When a brother is revolted away it is from a city of strength; and contentions are like the bar of a citadel.

²⁰ From the gains of a man's mouth his belly is satisfied; as it is the product of his own lips, he is satisfied himself.

²¹ Death and life are in the hand of the tongue; and just as they love it each man shall eat its fruit.

- 22** He that has found a wife, has found a good thing,
and shall draw forth favor from Jehovah. | **22** *Whoso* findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.
- 23** The poor man speaks in supplications ;
but the rich man utters back strong things. | **23** The poor useth entreaties : but the rich answereth roughly.
- 24** A man of friends is apt to be broken all to pieces ;
but there is that loves cleaving closer than a brother. | **24** A man that hath friends must show himself friendly ; and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

CHAPTER XIX.

- 1** Better is a poor man walking in his integrity,
than he that is crooked in his speech and
as such a fool.
- 2** Even because it has no knowledge life is
no good ;
but he that is hasty of foot is he that misses.
- 3** The folly of a man subverts his way ;
and then his heart is angry with Jehovah.
- 4** A competence adds many friends ;
but the poor is separated even from the friend he has.
- 5** A deceived witness shall not go unpunished ;
and he whose breath is lies shall not escape.
- 6** Many court a generous man ;
and every one is the friend of a man of gifts.
- 7** All the brothers of a poor man hate him,
for the same reason that his neighbors also
keep at a distance from him.
As one snatching at words they come to stand towards him.

CHAP. XIX.

BETTER is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.

2 Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good ; and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth.

3 The foolishness of man perverteth his way ; and his heart fretteth against the LORD.

4 Wealth maketh many friends : but the poor is separated from his neighbour.

5 A false witness shall not be unpunished ; and he that speaketh lies shall not escape.

6 Many will entreat the favour of the prince ; and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts.

7 All the brethren of the poor do hate him ; how much more do his friends go far from him ? he pursueth them with words, yet they are wanting to him

8 He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul; he that keepeth understanding shall find good.

9 A false witness shall not be unpunished; and he that speaketh lies shall perish.

10 Delight is not seemly for a fool; much less for a servant to have rule over princes.

11 The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.

12 The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favour is as dew upon the grass.

13 A foolish son is the calamity of his father; and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping.

14 House and riches are the inheritance of fathers; and a prudent wife is from the Lord.

15 Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.

16 He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul: but he that despiseth his ways shall die.

17 He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

18 Chasten thy son while there is hope; and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

19 A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment; for if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again.

8 He that gains heart loves his own soul. and He that keeps watch over discernment meets the result of finding good.

9 A deceived witness shall not go unpunished; and he whose breath is lies shall be lost.

10 Delight is not suited to a stupid man; for the same reason also that it is not to a servant to rule princes.

11 The intelligence of the commonest man gives slowness to his anger; and it is his honor to pass over an offence.

12 The roaring as of a young lion is the wrath of a king; and as dew upon herbs is his favor.

13 The ruin of his father is a stupid son; and a continual dropping are a wife's contentions.

14 House and competence are an inheritance from fathers; and a thrifty wife is from Jehovah.

15 Sloth causes a deep sleep to fall down; and an idle soul shall starve.

16 He that guards the commandment, guards himself; in scattering his ways he dies.

17 He that shows favor to the poor man, makes a borrower of Jehovah; and his transaction pays him.

18 Discipline thy son because there is now hope; but to kill him lift not up thy soul.

19 Roughness of anger lifts away penalty; but if it delivers, it must do so continually.

- 20 Hear counsel, and let discipline in; that thou mayest be wise in thine after history.
- 21 Many are the schemes in the heart of a man of the better sort; but the counsel of Jehovah as such stands.
- 22 The pleasure of the commonest sort of man is his kindness; and better off is a poor man than a false man of the better sort.
- 23 The fear of Jehovah serves as a life; and he that is satisfied with it has a dwelling; he shall not be visited as an evil.
- 24 The sluggard hides his hand in the dish; and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.
- 25 Smite a scorner and it makes the simple wise; and reproof for the discerning causes knowledge to be discerned.
- 26 He that preys upon a father, will drive out a mother; a son who awakens shame, will also utterly disgrace.
- 27 Cease, my son, to hear admonition, with the result of wandering further from the words of knowledge.
- 28 A worthless witness scorns judgment; and the mouth of the wicked eagerly devours worthlessness.
- 29 Judgments are already fixed for scorners; and blows for the back of the stupid.
- 20 Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.
- 21 There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.
- 22 The desire of a man is his kindness; and a poor man is better than a liar.
- 23 The fear of the LORD tendeth to life; and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil.
- 24 A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.
- 25 Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware; and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.
- 26 He that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach.
- 27 Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.
- 28 An ungodly witness scorneth judgment; and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity.
- 29 Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools.

CHAP. XX.

WINE is a mocker,
strong drink is raging;
and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

2 The fear of a king
is as the roaring of a lion; *whose* provoketh
him to anger sinneth
against his own soul.

3 It is an honour for
a man to cease from
strife: but every fool
will be meddling.

4 The sluggard will
not plow by reason of
the cold; therefore
shall he beg in harvest,
and have nothing.

5 Counsel in the
heart of man is like
deep water: but a man
of understanding will
draw it out.

6 Most men will pro-
claim every one his own
goodness: but a faithful
man who can find?

7 The just ~~was~~
walketh in his integ-
rity: his children are
blessed after him.

8 A king that sitteth
in the throne of judg-
ment scattereth away
all evil with his eyes.

9 Who can say, I
have made my heart
clean, I am pure from
my sin?

10 Divers weights,
and divers measures,
both of them are alike
abomination to the
Lord.

CHAPTER XX.

1 Wine is full of scoff; strong drink is full
of noise;
and every one who gets astray by it fails
of wisdom.

2 The roar as of a young lion is the terrible-
ness of a king.
He that throws himself upon him, loses his
life.

3 It is honor to the best sort of man to live
away from strife;
but every fool pushes recklessly on.

4 He who is a sluggard by reason of the
winter, will not plough.
He shall seek in harvest and there shall be
nothing.

5 Deep waters is counsel in the heart of a
man;
but a man of discernment will sink a
bucket after it.

6 Much of the mere man one calls his good-
ness;
but a faithful man, who can find?

7 He that takes his very walks of pleasure
in his integrity, is a righteous man.
Blessed are his children after him.

8 The king that sits upon the throne of judg-
ment
winnows all evil with his eyes.

9 Who can say, I have cleansed my heart?
I have become purified from my sin?

10 Divers weights and divers measures,
even they both, are an abomination to Je-
hovah.

- 11 Even by his common doings a child shall make himself known.
Is he pure? is just also this,—Is his work right?
- 12 The hearing ear and the seeing eye; even both of them are the work of Jehovah.
- 13 Love not sleep lest thou come to poverty. Open thine eyes. Be filled with good.
- 14 Bad, bad, says the buyer; but as he takes himself away, then he boasts.
- 15 There actually is gold, and plenty of pearls, and precious vessels, in the lips of knowledge.
- 16 Take his garment because he has gone security for a stranger; and on account of strange people make him give a pledge.
- 17 Sweet to the most intelligent man is the bread of deceit; but afterward his mouth shall be filled with gravel stones.
- 18 Do thou be fixed in plans by counsel; and by helmsmanship make war.
- 19 He that will disclose a secret will gad as a tale-bearer; and with him who as much as opens his lips have thou nothing to do.
- 20 He that curses his father and his mother; his lamp shall go out in the eye of the darkness.
- 21 An inheritance greedily seized in the beginning, also, as its after history, shall not be blessed.
- 22 Say not, I will make the evil good; wait on Jehovah, and let Him help thee.
- 11 Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.
- 12 The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them.
- 13 Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty: open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.
- 14 If it is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.
- 15 There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.
- 16 Take his garment that is surely for a stranger; and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.
- 17 Bread of deceit is sweet to a man: but afterwards his inouth shall be filled with gravel.
- 18 Every purpose is established by counsel; and with good advice make war.
- 19 He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.
- 20 Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.
- 21 An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed.
- 22 Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee.

²³ Divers weights
are an abomination
unto the Lord; and a
false balance is not
good.

²⁴ Man's goings are
of the Lord; how can
a man then understand
his own way?

²⁵ It is a snare to the
man who devoureth
that which is holy,
and after vows to make
enquiry.

²⁶ A wise king scat-
tereth the wicked, and
bringeth the wheel over
them.

²⁷ The spirit of man
is the candle of the
Lord, searching all the
inward parts of the
belly.

²⁸ Mercy and truth
preserve the king; and
his throne is uphelden
by mercy.

²⁹ The glory of
young men is their
strength; and the
beauty of old men is the
gray head.

³⁰ The blueness of a
wound cleanseth away
evil; so do stripes the
inward parts of the
belly.

CHAP. XXI.

THE king's heart is
in the hand of the
Lord, as the rivers of
water: he turneth it
whithersoever he will.

² Every way of a
man is right in his own
eyes: but the Lord
pondereth the hearts.

³ To do justice and
judgment is more ac-
ceptable to the Lord
than sacrifice.

⁴ An high look, and
a proud heart, and the
plowing of the wicked,
is sin.

- 23 An abomination to Jehovah are divers weights;
and balances of deceit are no good.
- 24 The steps of a powerful man are from Je-
hovah;
then a common man, how shall he discern
his way?
- 25 An act of consecration such that after vows
there comes inquiry as a snare has actually
swallowed a man in.
- 26 A winnower of the wicked is the wise king;
and he brings the wheel over them.
- 27 The lamp of Jehovah is the spirit of a man,
searching all the chambers of the belly.
- 28 Mercy and truth stand guard over a king;
and he has propped his throne by mercy.
- 29 Glory with young men is their strength;
and beauty with old men is grey hair.
- 30 The welts of a wound cleanse though as an
evil;
so do stripes the very chambers of the
belly.

CHAPTER XXI.

- 1 Streams of water is the heart of a king in
the hand of Jehovah;
upon anything He pleases He turns it.
- 2 As to the whole way of a man, right in
His own eyes,
and weighing out hearts, is Jehovah.
- 3 To execute righteousness and judgment
is more the choice of Jehovah than sacri-
fice.
- 4 Elation of eyes and dilation of heart,
the very light of the wicked, is the Sin-Of-
fering.

- 5 The close reckonings of a decided man
result only in profit;
but of every hasty man only in want.
- 6 The making of wealth by a lying tongue
is driven breath as of men chasing after
death.
- 7 The rapacity of the wicked snatches away
themselves;
because it was they that refused to carry
out judgment.
- 8 The man who has been twisting about as
to his way, has also been getting fur-
ther off;
but the pure man is straight-forward in his
work.
- 9 It is better to dwell upon a pinnacle of the
roof,
than that there should be a brawling woman
and a house in common.
- 10 The soul of a wicked man has conceived a
desire for evil.
His neighbor meets no favor in his eyes.
- 11 By the punishment of the scorner the sim-
ple becomes wise;
and by instruction for the wise, one receives
knowledge.
- 12 He who gives wisdom to the righteous
man by means of the house of the
wicked,
overturns the wicked by means of evil.
- 13 He who shuts his ear from the cry of the
weak;
even, because so doing, shall himself also
call, and shall not be answered.
- 14 A gift in secret tames anger;
and a present in the bosom, strong wrath.
- 15 The execution of judgment is joy to the
righteous,
but ruin to workers of iniquity.
- 5 The thoughts of
the diligent tend only
to plenteousness; but
of every one that is
hasty, only to want.
- 6 The getting of
treasures by a lying
tongue is a vanity toss-
ed and fro of them
that seek death.
- 7 The robbery of the
wicked shall destroy
them; because they
refuse to do judgment.
- 8 The way of man is
foward and strange:
but as for the pure,
his work is right.
- 9 It is better to dwell
in a corner of the
house-top, than with a
brawling woman in a
wide house.
- 10 The soul of the
wicked desireth evil;
his neighbour findeth
no favour in his eyes.
- 11 When the scorner
is punished, the simple
is made wise; and
when the wise is in-
structed, he receiveth
knowledge.
- 12 The righteous
man wisely consider-
eth the house of the
wicked: but God over-
throweth the wicked
for their wickedness.
- 13 Whoso stoppeth
his ears at the cry of
the poor, he also shall
cry himself, but shall
not be heard.
- 14 A gift in secret
pacifieth anger; and a
reward in the bosom
strong wrath.
- 15 It is joy to the
just to do judgment:
but destruction shall
be to the workers of in-
iquity.

¹⁶ The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead.

¹⁷ He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man ; he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.

¹⁸ The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright.

¹⁹ It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.

²⁰ There is treasure to be desired, and oil in the dwelling of the wise : but a foolish man spendeth it up.

²¹ He that followeth after righteousness and mercy, findeth life, righteousness, and honour.

²² A wise man scal-
eth the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof.

²³ Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles.

²⁴ Proud and haughty scorner is his name who dealeth in proud wrath.

²⁵ The desire of the slothful killeth him ; for his hands refuse to labour.

²⁶ He coveteth greedily all the day long ; but the righteous giveth, and sparseth not.

²⁷ The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination : how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind ?

16 Man wandering from the way of growing wise
shall abide in the assemblage of the shades.

17 A poor man loving happiness, loving wine and oil, does not create wealth.

18 A cover for the righteous man is the wicked man ; and in the place of the upright shall be the faithless.

19 Better is life in a desert land, than a contentious and fretful woman.

20 Treasure to be desired, and oil, are in the lodging-place of the wise man ; but a fool of a man devours himself.

21 He who pursues righteousness and kindness, shall find life, righteousness, and glory.

22 A wise man has scaled the city of the mighty, and is bringing down the strength of its place of confidence.

23 He that guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul from troubles.

24 Proud, haughty, scornful, is his name, who acts with the headlong gait of pride.

25 The desire of the sluggard kills him ; because his hands have refused to give it execution.

26 He creates himself a longing all the day ; while the righteous gives, and spares not.

27 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination ; because, also, he brings it for a calculated purpose.

- 28 A deceived witness perishes;
but a man that hearkens speaks forever.
- 29 One has been confirming a wicked man by
his mere countenance;
but the level walker, as such, beats firm his
way.
- 30 There is no wisdom, and there is no dis-
cernment,
and there is no counsel, against Jehovah.
- 31 A horse is made ready against a day of
battle;
and salvation against Jehovah.
- 28 A false witness
shall perish: but the
man that heareth
speaketh constantly.
- 29 A wicked man
hardeneth his face:
but as for the upright,
he directeth his way.
- 30 *There is no wis-
dom, nor under-
standing, nor counse-
l, against the Lord.*
- 31 *The horse is pre-
pared against the day
of battle: but safety is
of the Lord.*

CHAPTER XXII.

- 1 A name is to be chosen rather than great
wealth.
Grace is better than silver or than gold.
- 2 The rich man and poor man are fitted to-
gether,
Jehovah making all of them.
- 3 The subtle has seen the evil, and is cover-
ing it;
but the simple have rushed on, and been
punished.
- 4 The end of a humiliation which is the fear
of Jehovah
is wealth and honor and life.
- 5 Thorns are snares in the way of the crooked
man.
He that guards his soul shall get far from
them.
- 6 Hedge in a child upon the mouth of his
way:
even for the very reason that he grows old
he shall not depart from it.
- 1 A *GOOD name is*
rather to be chosen
than great riches, and
loving favour rather
than silver and gold.
- 2 *The rich and poor*
meet together; the
Lord is the maker of
them all.
- 3 *A prudent man*
foreseeth the evil, and
hideth himself: but
the simple pass on, and
are punished.
- 4 *By humility, and*
the fear of the Lord,
are riches, and honour,
and life.
- 5 *Thorns and snares*
are in the way of the
froward; he that doth
keep his soul shall be
far from them.
- 6 *Train up a child in*
the way he should go;
and when he is old, he
will not depart from it

7 The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.

8 He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity; and the rod of his anger shall fail.

9 He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

10 Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.

11 He that loveth purity of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend.

12 The eyes of the Lord preserve knowledge; and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor.

13 The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets.

14 The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein.

15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

16 He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.

17 Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge.

18 For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withhold be fitted in thy lips.

7 The rich man rules over the poor; and the borrower is servant to the man that lends.

8 He that sows iniquity, reaps worthlessness; and the rod of his career shall fail.

9 The bountiful eye, in its very self, is blessed; because it has given away its own food to the faint.

10 Cast out the scorner, and the cause of quarrel passes away; and strife and shame cease.

11 The king, loving purity of heart, has graciousness of his lips as his near companion.

12 The eyes of Jehovah have mounted guard over knowledge; but He subverts the words of the faithless.

13 The sluggard has been saying,—There is a lion in the street; I shall be slain in the midst of the broad ways.

14 A deep pit is the mouth of strange women. He at whom God is angry shall fall there.

15 Folly is fettered in the heart of a child. The rod of correction removes it from him.

16 He that oppresses the weak man, to make increase for himself, gives to the rich man, only with poverty as the result.

17 Incline thine ear and hear the words of the wise, and thou shalt incline thine heart to my knowledge.

18 Because it is pleasant because thou dost watch over them within thyself;

- therefore they shall get fixed together upon thy lips.
- 19 That thy ground of trust may come to be in Jehovah,
I have made thee know this day, even to thee.
- 20 Have I not written for thee eminent things as counsels and knowledge?
- 21 that I might make thee know the verity of words of truth,
so as to return words of truth to them that send for thee?
- 22 Rob not the weak because he is weak,
and crush not the afflicted in the gate:
- 23 because Jehovah takes their case;
and has already robbed the soul of them that rob them.
- 24 Associate not thyself with a fierce man;
and to a man of hot tempers go not in;
- 25 lest thou grow accustomed to his ways,
and take a snare to thy soul.
- 26 Be not among those that strike hands,
and among those that are surely for debts.
- 27 If thou hast nothing to pay,
wherefore should one take thy bed from under thee?
- 28 Draw not back the ancient boundary
which thy fathers set.
- 29 Seest thou a man quick in his errand?
He shall stand before kings;
he shall not stand before mean men.

19 That thy trust may be in the Lord, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee.

20 Have I not written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge;

21 That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?

22 Rob not the poor, because he is poor; neither oppress the afflicted in the gate;

23 For the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.

24 Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go;

25 Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.

26 Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts.

27 If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?

28 Remove not the ancient land-mark which thy fathers have set.

29 Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.

CHAPTER XXIII.

- 1 Forasmuch as thou sittest to eat with a Ruler,
discern well Who is before thee;
- 2 and thou hast put a knife to thy throat,
if thou be a man given to appetite.

CHAP. XXIII.
WHEN thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee;

2 And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.

³ Be not desirous of his dainties; for they are deceitful meat.

⁴ Labour not to be rich; cease from thine own wisdom.

⁵ Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away, as an eagle toward heaven.

⁶ Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats;

⁷ For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.

⁸ The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words.

⁹ Speak not in the ears of a fool; for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.

¹⁰ Remove not the old land-mark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless:

¹¹ For their Redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.

¹² Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge.

¹³ Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.

¹⁴ Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.

¹⁵ My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine;

¹⁶ Yea, my reins shall rejoice when thy lips speak right things.

³ Long not after His dainty meats; while He is Himself deceitful food.

⁴ Labor not to create wealth. Cease from thine own discernment.

⁵ Wilt thou fly after Him with thine eyes, and He not there?

For He is certain to make to Himself wings

as an eagle, and fly away to heaven.

⁶ Feed not on the food of Him that has an evil eye;

and long not after His dainty meats.

⁷ For as He has made an estimate in His soul, so is He.

Eat and drink, He says to thee; but His heart is not with thee.

⁸ Thy morsel, that thou hast eaten, thou shalt vomit up; and lose thy sweet words.

⁹ In the ears of a fool thou shalt not speak; if there be the reason that he despise the wisdom of thy words.

¹⁰ Draw not back the ancient boundary; and into the fields of the fatherless go not thou.

¹¹ For their Redeemer is mighty: He Himself will take their case with thee.

¹² Let thine own heart enter into discipline, and thine own ears to the words of knowledge.

¹³ Withhold not from a child correction. That thou beatest him with a rod shall be the reason that he shall not die.

¹⁴ Thyself beat him with a rod, and thou shalt snatch his soul from Sheol.

¹⁵ My son, if thy heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, yea, mine.

¹⁶ Yea, my very reins shall exult at thy lips' speaking right things.

- 17 Let not thy heart be aglow in sins,
but in the fear of Jehovah all the day.
- 18 For if there be indeed an hereafter,
then thine expectation shall not be cut off.
- 19 Hear for thyself, my son, and be wise;
and direct thine own heart into the way.
- 20 Be not among wine topers;
among squanderers of their own flesh.
- 21 For the toper and the squanderer shall be
made poor;
and slumber shall cover them with rags.
- 22 Listen to thy father, as the one that begat
thee;
and for the very reason that she is old,
despise not thy mother.
- 23 Buy the truth, and sell it not.
It is wisdom, and discipline, and discern-
ment.
- 24 The father of the righteous shall greatly
rejoice;
and he that begets a wise son shall also
have joy in him.
- 25 Let thy father rejoice, and thy mother;
and let her that bare thee be glad.
- 26 My son, give over thy heart to me;
and let thine eyes conceive delight in my
ways.
- 27 For the harlot is a deep ditch;
and the strange woman a narrow pit.
- 28 Yea, she herself, like loot, lies temptingly;
and increases the robbers among men.
- 29 Who has woe? Who has wretchedness?
Who has causes of strife?
Who has complaining? Who has wounds
without cause?
Who has fierceness of eyes?
- 17 Let not thine
heart envy sinners:
but be thou in the fear
of the LORD all the day
long.
- 18 For surely there
is an end; and thine
expectation shall not
be cut off.
- 19 Hear thou, my
son, and be wise, and
guide thine heart in
the way.
- 20 Be not among
wine-bibbers; among
riotous eaters of flesh.
- 21 For the drunkard
and the glutton shall
come to poverty; and
drowsiness shall clothe
a man with rags.
- 22 Hearken unto thy
father that begat thee,
and despise not thy
mother when she is
old.
- 23 Buy the truth, and
sell it not; *also* wis-
dom, and instruction,
and understanding.
- 24 The father of the
righteous shall greatly
rejoice; and he that
begetteth a wise *child*
shall have joy of him.
- 25 Thy father and
thy mother shall be
glad, and she that bare
thee shall rejoice.
- 26 My son, give me
thine heart, and let
thine eyes observe my
ways.
- 27 For a whore *is* a
deep ditch; and a
strange woman *is* a
narrow pit.
- 28 She also lieth in
wait as *for* a prey, and
increaseth the trans-
gressors among men.
- 29 Who hath woe?
who hath sorrow? who
hath contentions? who
hath babbling? who
hath wounds without
cause? who hath red-
ness of eyes?

³⁰ They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixed wine.

³¹ Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright:

³² At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.

³³ Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things:

³⁴ Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.

³⁵ They have stricken me, *shalt thou say*, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not; when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

CHAP. XXIV.

Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them:

² For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.

³ Through wisdom is an house builded, and by understanding it is established.

⁴ And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

⁵ A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength.

⁶ For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety.

⁷ Wisdom is too high for a fool; he openeth not his mouth in the gate.

⁸ He that devieth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person.

- ³⁰ They who are late over wine; they who go in for being curious in mixed drink.
- ³¹ Look not upon wine because it is red; because it shows its bead in the cup; because it goes right well.
- ³² As its after effect, it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder.
- ³³ Thine eyes see strange things; and thine heart speaks subversive things.
- ³⁴ And thou dost become like one lying in the open sea; or like one lying at the mast head.
- ³⁵ They have beaten me, and I felt no pain; they have struck me; I knew nothing. When I awake, I will seek it yet again.

CHAPTER XXIV.

- ¹ Do not thou get excited about evil men; and desire not to be with them.
- ² For their heart, in its very mutterings, mutters out robbery; and their lips talk trouble.
- ³ By wisdom is a house builded; and by discernment does it cause itself to stand.
- ⁴ And by knowledge are its chambers filled with all precious and pleasant competency
- ⁵ A strong man, if wise, is as a power indeed; and a man of knowledge makes strength really strong.
- ⁶ For by helmsmanship thou shalt make thy war; and in the greatness of a counsellor there is safety.
- ⁷ The wisdoms attaching to a fool are perfect jewels; though he opens not his mouth in the gate.
- ⁸ Though he thinks to do evil, men might call him a very master of devices.

- 9 The design of folly is the Sin-Offering; and the abomination, in the case of man, is the scorner.
- 10 If thou hast been remiss in the day of narrow trial, still narrower has become thy strength.
- 11 If thou forbearest to snatch them that are laid hold of for death, and them that are tottering to the slaughter;
- 12 because thou sayest,—Behold we have not the knowledge: as to this, is there not One weighing out hearts? He has the discernment: and One watching thy soul? He has the knowledge; and He will render to man according to his works.
- 13 Eat honey, my son, because it is good, and the droppings, as sweet upon thy palate.
- 14 So shall the knowledge of wisdom be to thy soul. If thou hast found it, and there be a hereafter, then thine expectation shall not be cut off.
- 15 Lie not in wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous. Rob not his resting-place.
- 16 For the righteous man shall fall seven times, and rise again; while the wicked shall be overthrown as an evil.
- 17 Rejoice not at the fall of thine enemy; and let not thy heart exult at his overthrow;
- 18 lest Jehovah see, and it be evil in His eyes; and He recall His anger from him.
- 19 Be not angry against evil doers; be not excited about the wicked;
- 20 for there comes no future for the evil man; the light of the wicked shall be put out.
- 9 The thought of foolishness is sin; and the scorner is an abomination to men.
- 10 If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.
- 11 If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain:
- 12 If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?
- 13 My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste:
- 14 So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.
- 15 Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; spoil not his resting-place:
- 16 For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.
- 17 Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth; and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth;
- 18 Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.
- 19 Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked:
- 20 For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out.

- ²¹ My son, fear thou the Lord and the king; : and meddle not with them that are given to change:
- ²² For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?
- ²³ These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment.
- ²⁴ He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him:
- ²⁵ But to them that rebuke him shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them.
- ²⁶ Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer.
- ²⁷ Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house.
- ²⁸ Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause; and deceive not with thy lips.
- ²⁹ Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work.
- ³⁰ I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;
- ³¹ And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone-wall thereof was broken down.
- ³² Then I saw, and considered it well; I looked upon it, and received instruction.
- ³³ Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep.
- ³⁴ So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.
- ²¹ Fear Jehovah, my son, and the King. With them given to change have thou nothing to do.
- ²² For Their heavy inflictions shall come suddenly; and the destruction by the Two, who is there that knows?
- ²³ Even as to These, for the wise to be partial in judgment is not good.
- ²⁴ Him that says to the wicked,—Thou art righteous, nations shall curse, peoples shall treat with indignation.
- ²⁵ And to them that set the thing right, it shall be pleasant; and upon them shall come the blessing of the good man.
- ²⁶ He kisses lips, who returns straight-forward words.
- ²⁷ Do up thy work without; and adjust it for thyself in the field. Then thou hast also already built thy house.
- ²⁸ Be not a witness to no purpose against thy neighbor, and, mayhap, deceive with thy lips.
- ²⁹ Say not, As he has done to me, so I will do to him; I will render back to a man according to his work.
- ³⁰ I came upon the field of the slothful, and upon the vineyard of the man wanting heart;
- ³¹ and lo! it was all grown up with nettles; brambles covered its face; and the wall, as to its stones, was pulled down.
- ³² And I looked for my own sake; I applied my heart; I saw; I received correction.
- ³³ A little sleep! A little drowsing! A little folding of the hands for rest!
- ³⁴ and thy poverty, sauntering along, has entered; and thy want, as a bucklered man.

CHAPTER XXV.

- 1 ALSO these are Proverbs of Solomon
which the men of Hezekiah, King of Ju-
dah, preserved.
- 2 It is the glory of Gods to cover over a
thing ;
but the glory of Kings to search a thing
out.
- 3 The heavens, as to height, and the earth,
as to depth,
and the heart of Kings there is no search-
ing.
- 4 Try dross from silver,
and there comes forth a vessel for the finer.
- 5 Try the wicked before the King,
and His throne is set firm in righteousness.
- 6 Trick not thyself out before the King ;
and in the place of the great stand not
thou up.
- 7 For it is better to say to thee,—Come up
hither ;
than to put thee down before the Prince
whom thine eyes have seen.
- 8 Go not forth hastily to strive ;
lest what thou doest, in its after conse-
quence,
be thy neighbor putting thee to shame.
- 9 Debate thy cause with thy neighbor ;
and have not the exposure of another tri-
bunal ;
- 10 lest whosoever hear, pity thee ;
and thine infamy turn not away.
- 11 Apples of gold on a back ground of silver
is a word uttered upon its time.
- 12 A ring of gold and trinket of fine gold
is a wise reprobation upon a listening ear.
- 13 Like the sharp tingling of snow on a har-
vest day
is a trusty messenger to them that send
him ;
yea, the soul of his master he revives.

CHAP. XXV.

THESE are also pro-
verbs of Solomon,
which the men of Heze-
kiah, king of Judah
copied out.

2 It is the glory of
God to conceal a thing :
but the honour of kings
is to search out a mat-
ter.

3 The heaven for
height, and the earth
for depth, and the heart
of kings is unsearch-
able.

4 Take away the
dross from the silver,
and there shall come
forth a vessel for the
finer.

5 Take away the
wicked from before the
king, and his throne
shall be established in
righteousness.

6 Put not forth thy-
self in the presence of
the king, and stand not
in the place of great
men.

7 For better it is that
it be said unto thee,
Come up hither, than
that thou shouldst be
put lower in the pres-
ence of the prince
whom thine eyes have
seen.

8 Go not forth hastily
to strive, lest thou
know not what to do
in the end thereof,
when thy neighbour
hath put thee to shame.

9 Debate thy cause
with thy neighbour
himself, and discover
not a secret to another ;

10 Lest he that hear-
eth it put thee to
shame, and thine in-
famy turn not away.

11 A word fitly
spoken is like apples
of gold in pictures of
silver.

12 As an ear-ring of
gold, and an ornament
of fine gold, so is a wise
reprobation upon an obe-
dient ear.

13 As the cold of
snow in the time of
harvest, so is a faithful
messenger to them that
send him ; for he re-
fresheth the soul of his
masters.

¹⁴ Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift, is like clouds and wind without rain.

¹⁵ By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone.

¹⁶ Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee; lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.

¹⁷ Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house; lest he be weary of thee, and *so* hate thee.

¹⁸ A man that bear-
eth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.

¹⁹ Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.

²⁰ As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.

²¹ If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:

²² For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee.

²³ The north wind driveth away rain; so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.

²⁴ It is better to dwell in a corner of the house-top, than with a hawling woman, and in a wide house.

²⁵ As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.

¹⁴ Clouds and wind and no rain is a man boasting himself of a false gift.

¹⁵ By slowness of anger is a prince per-
suaded; and a soft tongue breaks the bone.

¹⁶ Hast thou found honey, eat what is suf-
ficient for thee; lest thou be filled with it, and vomit it up.

¹⁷ Make scarce thy foot from thy neighbor's
house; lest he be full of thee, and hate thee.

¹⁸ A club and a sword and a sharp arrow is a man making answer for his neighbor as a deceived witness.

¹⁹ A broken tooth and a stiffened foot is the trustiness of the faithless in the day of trouble.

²⁰ One tricking out a garment on a cold day;
vinegar upon natron;
and a singer of songs upon an evil heart.

²¹ If he who hates thee hunger, give him food to eat;

if he thirst, give him water to drink;

²² for, shovelling live coals thyself upon his head,
Jehovah shall punish thee also.

²³ A north wind breeds rain,
and angry countenances a secret tongue.

²⁴ Better is dwelling upon a pinnacle of the roof,
than a contentious woman and a house in common.

²⁵ Cold water upon a fainting soul,
and good news from a Far Off Land.

- 26 A trampled fountain and ruined spring
is a righteous man thought tottering by the wicked.
- 27 To eat much honey is not good ;
but close scrutiny of men's own glory is glory.
- 28 A broken down city without a wall
is a man who has no enclosure around his spirit.
- 26 A righteous man falling down before the wicked *is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring.*
- 27 *It is not good to eat much honey : so /or men to search their own glory is not glory.*
- 28 He that hath no rule over his own spirit *is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.*

CHAPTER XXVI.

- 1 As snow in summer and rain in harvest ;
so honor does not suit a fool.
- 2 Like a bird, as to roaming, like a swallow,
as to flight,
so a curse to no purpose does not come.
- 3 A whip for the horse, a bit for the ass,
and a rod for the fools' back.
- 4 Answer not a fool according to his folly ;
lest thou be like him, even thou thyself.
- 5 Answer a fool according to his folly ;
lest he become wise in his own eyes.
- 6 One who cuts off the feet, one who drinks wrong,
is he who sends messages by the hand of a fool.
- 7 The legs drag after the lame ;
so does a proverb in the mouth of fools.
- 8 As he that binds a stone in a sling,
so is he that gives honor to a fool.
- 9 A thorn has gone up into the hand of the drunkard,
and a proverb into the mouth of fools.
- 10 An arrow wounding everybody
is he, also, that rewards the fool, and rewards transgressors.
- 1 As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest ; so honour is not seemly for a fool.
- 2 As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying ; so the curse causeless shall not come.
- 3 A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back.
- 4 Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him.
- 5 Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.
- 6 He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool, cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage.
- 7 The legs of the lame are not equal ; so is a parable in the mouth of fools.
- 8 As he that bindeth a stone in a sling ; so is he that giveth honour to a fool.
- 9 As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard ; so is a parable in the mouth of fools.
- 10 The great God, that formed all things, both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors.

- ¹¹ As a dog returneth to his vomit : so a fool returneth to his folly.
- ¹² Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit ? there is more hope of a fool than of him.
- ¹³ The slothful *man* saith, There is a lion in the way ; a lion is in the streets.
- ¹⁴ As the door turneth upon its hinge ; so doth the slothful upon his bed.
- ¹⁵ The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom ; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth.
- ¹⁶ The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.
- ¹⁷ He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.
- ¹⁸ As a mad *man*, who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death,
- ¹⁹ So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport ?
- ²⁰ Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out ; so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.
- ²¹ As coals are to burning coal, and wood to fire ; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.
- ²² The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.
- ²³ Burning lips, and a wicked heart, are like a potsherd covered with silver dross.
- ²⁴ He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him :
- ¹¹ As the dog turns back to his vomit again, the fool turns back in his folly.
- ¹² Seest thou a man wise in his own eyes ? Hope for a fool must be outside of him.
- ¹³ The sluggard has been saying,—There is a lion in the way, a lion amid the open squares.
- ¹⁴ The door turns round upon its hinge, and a sluggard upon his bed.
- ¹⁵ The sluggard has hid his hand in the dish. He is too tired to bring it to his mouth again.
- ¹⁶ The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who report back the taste.
- ¹⁷ He takes a dog by the ears, who, going up, gets himself roused about a quarrel not his own.
- ¹⁸ As a crazy man shooting hot darts, arrows, and death,
- ¹⁹ so is a man, who has deceived his neighbor, and said,—Am I not in sport ?
- ²⁰ Where no wood is, fire goes out ; and by there being no tale-bearer strife settles down.
- ²¹ Coal to live coals, and wood to fire, and a contentious man to kindle strife.
- ²² The words of a tale-bearer are dainty morsels ; and they go down the chambers of the belly.
- ²³ Silver dross spread on some earthenware fragment are burning lips and an evil heart.
- ²⁴ A hater dissembles with his lips, and lays away deceit within him.

- 25 Because he makes his voice kind, do not trust him ; for seven abominations are in his heart.
- 26 Hatred covers with a deceit the evil of which shall be laid bare in the great assembly.
- 27 The digger of a pit falls into it ; and upon him who rolls a stone it returns back.
- 28 A lying tongue hates its victims ; and a flattering mouth works ruin.

25 When he speaketh fair, believe him not ; for *there are* seven abominations in his heart.

26 *Whose* hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the whole congregation.

27 Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein ; and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.

28 A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it ; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.

CHAPTER XXVII.

- 1 PRAISE not thyself in the morrow ; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.
- 2 Let another praise thee, and not thine own mouth ; a stranger, and not thine own lips.
- 3 A stone is heavy, and the sand is weighty ; and the trouble of a fool is heavier than they both.
- 4 Wrath is cruelty, and anger is a flood : and who is able to stand before jealousy ?
- 5 Better is rebuke made openly than love concealed.
- 6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend ; and the kisses of an enemy are many.
- 7 A full soul loathes a honey-comb ; but, as to the hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet.
- 8 As a bird is shaken from its nest ; so a man is shaken from his place.

CHAP. XXVII.

BOAST not thyself of to-morrow ; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

2 Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth ; a stranger, and not thine own lips.

3 A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty ; but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both.

4 Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous ; but who is able to stand before envy ?

5 Open rebuke is better than secret love.

6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend ; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

7 The full soul loathes an honey-comb ; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

8 As a bird that wandereth from her nest ; so is a man that wandereth from his place.

⁹ Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart; so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.

¹⁰ Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not, neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity: for better is a neighbour that is near, than a brother far off.

¹¹ My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproacheth me.

¹² A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.

¹³ Take his garment that is surely for a stranger, and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

¹⁴ He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.

¹⁵ A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.

¹⁶ Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself.

¹⁷ Iron sharpeneth iron: so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

¹⁸ Whoso keepeth the fig-tree shall eat the fruit thereof; so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.

¹⁹ As in water face answereth to face; so the heart of man to man.

⁹ Oil and incense delight the heart, and sweetness its friend, from the dictate of appetite.

¹⁰ Thine own friend and thy father's friend forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy ruin; for better is a neighbor that is near, than a brother far off.

¹¹ My son, be wise, and make my heart glad. Then I have somewhat to answer him that reproaches me.

¹² The subtle has seen the evil; he is hid. The simple have pushed on; they are punished.

¹³ Take a man's garment because he has become surely for a stranger; and, on account of a strange woman, make him give a pledge.

¹⁴ He that blesses his neighbor with a loud voice, rising up early in the morning, it shall be accounted a curse in him.

¹⁵ A continual dropping in a very rainy day, and a contentious woman, are alike.

¹⁶ He that hides her has hid the wind; and must call upon the very oil of his right hand.

¹⁷ Iron is welded by iron; so, for a man, the tie is the face of his friend.

¹⁸ He that guards the fig tree eats its fruit; and he that stands watch over his lord is honored.

¹⁹ As water, face to face; so heart, man to man.

- 20 Sheol and Abaddon are never full; and the eyes of man are never full.
- 21 A fining pot for silver, and a furnace for gold; so a man under his acts of praise.
- 22 Though thou bray a fool in a mortar in the midst of grits with a pestle, his folly shall not depart from him.
- 23 Do thou carefully know the faces of thy flock; and set thy heart upon thy herds;
- 24 for riches are not forever: and does the crown endure throughout all generations?
- 25 The hay appeared, and the grass was seen, and mountain herbage gathered.
- 26 There were lambs for thy clothing, and he goats as a rent for the field;
- 27 and abundance of goat's milk for thy food, for the food of thy house, and for the life of thy maidens.

20 Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.

21 As the fining-pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise.

22 Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.

23 Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds:

24 For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation?

25 The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered:

26 The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field.

27 And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

- 1 As to the wicked man, even when he is not pursuing, the righteous have taken flight. but as to the righteous a man may be as confident as a lion.
- 2 In the sin of a land many are its leaders; but by the plainest man who imparts discernment, getting knowledge, it makes itself endure.
- 3 A strong man, who is poor, and oppresses the weak, is a shower that comes sweeping, so that there is no food.
- 4 Forsaking direction, men praise the wicked; but, observing direction, they make war upon them.

CHAP. XXVIII.

THE wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.

2 For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof: but by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged.

3 A poor man that oppresseth the poor is like a sweeping rain, which leaveth no food.

4 They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them.

5 Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the Lord understand all things.

6 Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.

7 Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father.

8 He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.

9 He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.

10 Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall have good things in possession.

11 The rich man is wise in his own conceit: but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.

12 When righteous men do rejoice, there is great glory: but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden.

13 He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

14 Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.

5 Evil men put no meaning upon judgment; but they that seek Jehovah put a meaning upon everything.

6 Better off is a poor man, walking in his integrity, than he that is led into double ways, and, as such, is rich.

7 He that observes direction is a son that gives instruction; but he that keeps company with the base does even his father harm.

8 He that increases his competence by exactation and usury is gathering it for some one who will favor the weak.

9 He that averts his ear from hearing direction, even his prayer shall be abomination.

10 Whoso leads the righteous astray in an evil path shall himself fall into his own pit, while the upright get good.

11 He that is wise in his own eyes, is a rich man; but a poor man, who can discriminate, searches him out.

12 In the exulting of the righteous there is great beauty: but, when the wicked rise, a man must dig deep to understand it.

13 He that covers his sins shall not prosper; but he that confesses and forsakes shall find mercy.

14 Blessed is the man who fears continually; but he that hardens his heart, shall fall as being an evil.

- 15 A roaring lion and a ranging bear
is a wicked ruler over a weak people.
- 16 A prince, wanting discernment, and of
great exactions,
shall prolong the days of them that hate
robbery.
- 17 A man weighed down with the blood of a
soul;
let him flee to the pit; let none stay him.
- 18 He that walks as a whole man shall be
saved;
but he that is turned two ways shall fall in
one.
- 19 He that works his land shall be filled with
food;
but he that follows after the worthless
shall be filled with poverty.
- 20 A trustful man shall be rich with blessings;
but he that is in a hurry to make wealth
shall not go unpunished.
- 21 To show partiality is not good;
though about a morsel of food a strong
man may be offended away.
- 22 He that is nervously trembling about a
competency is a man of an evil eye,
and knows it not, because want is coming
upon him.
- 23 He that reproves a man, afterwards will
find favor,
more than he that flatters with his tongue.
- 24 He that robs his father and his mother,
and says,—It is no transgression,
is a companion, in this very act, of the man
who is a destroyer.
- 25 A large appetite stirs up quarrel;
but he that trusts in Jehovah is made fat.
- 15 As a roaring lion,
and a ranging bear; so
is a wicked ruler over
the poor people.
- 16 The prince that
wanteth understanding
is also a great oppres-
sor: but he that hateth
covetousness shall pro-
long his days.
- 17 A man that doeth
violence to the blood
of any person shall flee
to the pit; let no man
stay him.
- 18 Whoso walketh
uprightly shall be
saved: but he that is
perverse in his ways
shall fall at once.
- 19 He that tilleth his
land shall have plenty
of bread: but he that
followeth after vain
persons shall have pov-
erty enough.
- 20 A faithful man
shall abound with
blessings: but he that
maketh haste to be
rich shall not be inno-
cent.
- 21 To have respect
of persons is not good:
for, for a piece of bread
that man will trans-
gress.
- 22 He that hasteth
to be rich hath an evil
eye, and considereth
not that poverty shall
come upon him.
- 23 He that rebuketh
a man, afterwards shall
find more favour than
he that flattereth with
the tongue.
- 24 Whoso robbeth
his father or his moth-
er, and saith, It is no
transgression; the
same is the companion
of a destroyer.
- 25 He that is of a
proud heart stirreth up
strife: but he that put-
teth his trust in the
Lord shall be made
fat.

²⁶ He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool; but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

²⁷ He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack; but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.

²⁸ When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase.

26 He that trusts in his own heart, as so doing is a fool; though he that walks in wisdom, as so doing is delivered.

27 Giving to the poor, there shall be no want; but hiding one's eyes, one shall have many a curse.

28 By the wicked rising a man is puzzled; but, by their perishing, the righteous are made great.

CHAP. XXIX.

He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

² When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked bear eth rule, the people mourn.

³ Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance.

⁴ The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it.

⁵ A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.

⁶ In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare; but the righteous doth sing and rejoice.

CHAPTER XXIX.

1 A man given to reproving, who hardens the neck, shall suddenly be broken, and that without remedy.

2 By the righteous being made great, the people are made glad; but by the wicked man bearing rule, a people are made to mourn.

3 A man, loving wisdom, shall make his father glad; but a companion of harlots shall destroy a competency.

4 A king by judgment gives stability to a land; but a man, free in his bestowals, pulls it down.

5 A man of influence, speaking flatteringly about his neighbor, spreads a net for his feet.

6 In the sin of an evil man is a snare; but the righteous overcomes and rejoices.

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| <p>7 The righteous man, taking knowledge of
the cause of the weak,
the wicked man makes no attempt to know
it.</p> <p>8 Scornful men set a city on fire ;
but the wise repress passion.</p> <p>9 A wise man has been in conflict with the
foolish man;
and there has been commotion and de-
rision, but no rest.</p> <p>10 Men of blood hate integrity ;
but the righteous seek after its very self.</p> <p>11 A fool acts forth all his spirit ;
but a wise man subdues it back.</p> <p>12 A ruler, paying close attention to some
false thing,
will have altogether, as his ministers,
wicked men.</p> <p>13 The poor man and the oppressor fit to-
gether;
Jehovah enlightens the eyes of both.</p> <p>14 The king, judging the weak with truth,
his throne is set firm forever.</p> <p>15 The rod and reproof give wisdom ;
but a child, left to his own way, makes his
mother ashamed.</p> <p>16 By the wicked being made great sin is
made great ;
but the righteous see clearer by their fall.</p> <p>17 Discipline thy son and he shall bring thee
rest ;
yea, he shall give pleasures to thyself.</p> | <p><i>7 The righteous con-
sidereth the cause of
the poor : but the wicked
regardeth not to
know it.</i></p> <p><i>8 Scornful men bring
a city into a snare : but
wise men turn away
wrath.</i></p> <p><i>9 If a wise man con-
tendeth with a foolish
man, whether he rage
or laugh, there is no
rest.</i></p> <p><i>10 The blood-thirsty
hate the upright : but
the just seek his soul.</i></p> <p><i>11 A fool uttereth all
his mind : but a wise
man keepeth it in till
afterwards.</i></p> <p><i>12 If a ruler hearken
to lies, all his servants
are wicked.</i></p> <p><i>13 The poor and the
deceitful man meet to-
gether ; the Lord light-
eneth both their eyes.</i></p> <p><i>14 The king that
faithfully judgeth the
poor, his throne shall
be established for ever.</i></p> <p><i>15 The rod and re-
proof give wisdom : but
a child left to himself
bringeth his mother to
shame.</i></p> <p><i>16 When the wicked
are multiplied, trans-
gression increaseth :
but the righteous shall
see their fall.</i></p> <p><i>17 Correct thy son,
and he shall give thee
rest ; yea, he shall give
delight unto thy soul.</i></p> |
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18 Where there is no vision, the people perish : but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

19 A servant will not be corrected by words ; for though he understandeth he will not answer.

20 Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words ? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

21 He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child, shall have him become his son at the length.

22 An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.

23 A man's pride shall bring him low ; but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

24 Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul : he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not.

25 The fear of man bringeth a snare : but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.

26 Many seek the ruler's favour ; but every man's judgment cometh from the Lord.

27 An unjust man is an abomination to the just, and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked.

18 Through there being no vision a people are let free ; but blessed is he who observes a direction.

19 By words a servant is not disciplined ; for he may attend, and there be no real response.

20 Seest thou a man hasty in his words ? hope for a fool is outside of him.

21 He that delicately brings up his servant from a child, shall have him become a son at the length.

22 An angry man stirs the cause of strife ; and a wrathful one, great sin.

23 A man's pride shall bring him low ; but one low in spirit shall get hold of honor.

24 He that walks with a thief, hates his own self.
He hears the oath, but does not inform.

25 A man's fear brings a snare ; but he that trusts in Jehovah shall be set on high.

26 Many seek the ruler's favor ; but a man's judgment is from Jehovah.

27 An abomination to the righteous is a wicked man ; and an abomination to the wicked man is he that is righteous in his way.

CHAPTER XXX.

CHAP. XXX.

THE words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy : the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal,

1 Words of I-Fear, Son of the Godly ; The Prophecy :—

The Strong Man speaks to God-with-me, to God-with-me and to I-am-able.

- 2 Forasmuch as I am more brutish as to myself, than a man of the better sort, and have not the intelligence of a common man,
- 3 and have not been taught wisdom, and yet know the knowledge of holy things;
- 4 who has gone up to heaven and come down ?
who has gathered the wind in his fists ?
who has bound the waters in a garment ?
who has set firm all the extremities of the earth ?
what is his name, and what is his son's name ? Because, Thou knowest.
- 5 Every speech of God is tried.
He is a buckler to them that take refuge in Him.
- 6 Add thou not unto His words ;
lest He use thee for purposes of reproof , and thou be shown up as false.
- 7 Two things have I asked from Thee .
Refuse me not before I die.
- 8 Remove far from me naughtiness and fraud .
Give me neither poverty nor riches .
Let me break off the food appointed for me .
- 9 Lest I be full, and deny ,
and say,—Who is Jehovah ?
or, lest I be poor, and steal ,
and wrest the name of my God .
- 10 Give not tongue service, as a servant to his master ,
lest He curse thee, and thou be held guilty .
- 11 A generation after will curse its father , and not bless its mother .
- 12 A generation after that will be clean in its own eyes ,
and yet not washed from its filthiness .
- 13 A generation still after, O how lofty have become its eyes ,
and its eyelids lifted up .
- 14 A generation further yet will have swords for its teeth, and knives for its fangs ,

² Surely I *am* more brutish than *any* man, and have not the understanding of a man.

³ I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.

⁴ Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended ? who hath gathered the wind in his fists ? who hath bound the waters in a garment ? who hath established all the ends of the earth ? what *is* his name, and what *is* his son's name, if thou canst tell ?

⁵ Every word of God is pure : he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him .

⁶ Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar .

⁷ Two things have I required of thee ; deny me *them* not before I die :

⁸ Remove far from me vanity and lies ; give me neither poverty nor riches : feed me with food convenient for me :

⁹ Lest I be full, and deny *thee*, and say, Who *is* the LORD ? or lest I be poor, and steal , and take the name of my God in vain .

¹⁰ Accuse not a servant unto his master , lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty .

¹¹ There is a generation that curseth their father , and doth not bless their mother .

¹² There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes , and yet is not washed from their filthiness .

¹³ There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes ! and their eyelids are lifted up .

¹⁴ There is a generation whose teeth are as swords , and their jaw-teeth as knives , to devour the poor from off the earth , and the needy from among men .

15 The horse-leech bath two daughters, crying. Give, give. There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough:

16 The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough.

17 The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.

18 There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not:

19 The way of an eagle in the air, the way of a serpent upon a rock, the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, and the way of a man with a maid.

20 Such is an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wireth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.

21 For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear:

22 For a servant when he reigneth, and a fool when he is filled with meat;

23 For an odious woman when she is married, and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress.

24 There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise:

25 The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer;

26 The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks;

27 The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands;

to devour the troubled from the earth, and the needy from among men.

15 The horse leech has two daughters, Give, Give.

These three things are never satisfied; four have never said,—Enough :—

16 Sheol; and the enclosure of the womb; the earth, which has never filled with water; and fire, which has never said,—Enough.

17 The eye that mocks a father, and has a contempt for obeying a mother, the ravens of the brook shall bore it through,

and the children of the eagle shall eat it.

18 These three things are quite beyond me; yea, four I cannot mark :—

19 the way of the eagle in the heavens; the way of a serpent over a rock; the way of a ship in the open sea; and the way of a man in a girl.

20 In such a way has the adulterous woman eaten, and wiped her mouth, and said,—I have committed no naughtiness.

21 Under three things the world has been disquieted; and under four she will never be able to bear up:—

22 under a servant, because he becomes king;

and a vile fellow, because he is sated with food;

23 under a hateful woman, because she is married; and a handmaid, because she dispossesses her mistress.

24 These four are little things of earth; and it is such, that are wise, being made wise.

25 The ants are a people of no strength, yet they make sure their food in the summer.

26 Conies are a people not strong, yet they fix their dwelling in a rock.

27 There is no king for the locust, yet he goes forth making fair division of all.

- 28 The spotted lizard takes hold with his hands,
and such as he is in kings' palaces.
- 29 These three make each step good,
yea, four make good their going :—
- 30 a lion, mighty among beasts,
and that turns not back for any ;
- 31 a grey-hound, or a he-goat,
and a King ! Do not thou stand against
Him.
- 32 If thou hast been withered down, by lifting
thyself up,
and if thou hast been meditating with a
hand upon the mouth,
- 33 forasmuch as pressing milk presses out
whey,
and pressing the nose presses out blood,
so pressing down passion presses away
strife.

28 The spider taketh
hold with her hands,
and is in kings' palaces.

29 There be three
things which go well,
yea, four are comedy in
going :

30 A lion, *which is*
strongest among beasts,
and turneth not away
for any ;

31 A grey-hound ; an
he-goat, also ; and a
king, against whom
there is no rising up.

32 If thou hast done
foolishly in lifting up
thyself, or if thou hast
thought evil, *lay thine*
hand upon thy mouth.

33 Surely the churning
of milk bringeth
forth butter, and the
wringing of the nose
bringeth forth blood ;
so the forcing of wrath
bringeth forth strife.

CHAPTER XXXI.

- 1 Words in respect to the Seed-of-God, a
King ;
a prophecy in agreement with which His
mother disciplined Him.
- 2 What is my son ? And what is the son of
my womb ?
and what the son of my vows ?
- 3 Give not thy strength to women ;
or thy ways so as to destroy kings.
- 4 Let it not be for kings, for the seed of
God ;
let it not be for kings to drink wine ;
nor for princes ; or strong drink :
- 5 lest one drink, and forget what is com-
manded,
and set wrong the cause of any of the sons
of misery.
- 6 Give ye strong drink to him that is being
lost ;
and wine to the embittered in soul.
- 7 Let him drink, and forget his wretched-
ness,
and remember his trouble no more.

CHAP. XXXI.

THE words of king
Lemuel, the prophecy
that his mother taught
him.

2 What, my son ?
and what, the son of
my womb ? and what,
the son of my vows ?

3 Give not thy
strength unto women,
nor thy ways to that
which destroyeth
kings.

4 *It is not for kings*
O Lemuel, *it is not for*
kings to drink wine,
nor for princes strong
drink ;

5 Lest they drink,
and forget the law, and
pervert the judgment
of any of the afflicted.

6 Give strong drink
unto him that is ready
to perish, and wine un-
to those that be of
heavy hearts.

7 Let him drink, and
forget his poverty, and
remember his misery
no more.

8 Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.

9 Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.

10 Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

11 The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

12 She will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life.

13 She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.

14 She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar.

15 She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.

16 She considereth a field, and buyeth it; with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.

17 She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.

18 She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.

19 She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.

20 She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.

21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet.

22 She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.

23 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.

24 She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.

8 Open thy mouth for the dumb man, to plead the cause of all the children of a change.

9 Open thy mouth; judge righteousness; and plead the cause of the afflicted and needy.

10 Who can find a capable woman?

So that her price is far above pearls.

11 The heart of her husband has safely trusted her;

so that he has no lack of gain.

12 She has been doing him good, and not evil, all the days of her life.

13 She has hunted up wool and flax, and worked cheerfully with her hands.

14 She has become like the ships of a merchant;

she brings her food from afar.

15 She rises, also, while it is yet night; and gives a portion to her house, and an allowance to her maidens.

16 She has considered a field, and takes it. Of the gain of her hands she has planted a vineyard.

17 She has girded her loins with strength, and strengthens her arms.

18 She has tasted whether her merchandize be good.

Her candle goes not out by night.

19 She has thrown out her hands in spinning; and her hands have held the spindle.

20 She has opened her palm to the afflicted, and held out her hands to the needy.

21 She is not afraid of snow for her household; for all her household have been clothed in crimson.

22 She has made for herself coverlets: cotton and purple are her clothing.

23 Her husband has become known in the gates,

in sitting with the elders of the land.

24 She has made under-linen, and sold it; and delivered girdles to the Canaanite

- 25 Strength and beauty are her clothing ;
and she laughs at the day that is yet to
come.
- 26 She has opened her mouth with wisdom ;
and kind direction is upon her tongue.
- 27 She has looked well to the ways of her
house ;
and eats not the bread of idleness.
- 28 Her children have risen up to bless her.
Her husband ; he also praises her.
- 29 Many daughters have done ably ;
but thou hast gone up above them all.
- 30 Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain ;
a woman that fears Jehovah, in that shall
praise herself.
- 31 Give her of the gain of her hands ;
and let her works praise her in the gates.

25 Strength and hon-
our *are* her clothing ;
and she shall rejoice in
time to come.

26 She openeth her
mouth with wisdom ;
and in her tongue *is*
the law of kindness.

27 She looketh well
to the ways of her
household, and eateth
not the bread of idle-
ness.

28 Her children arise
up, and call her blessed ;
her husband *also*,
and he praises her.

29 Many daughters
have done virtuously ;
but thou excellest them
all.

30 Favour *is* deceit-
ful, and beauty *is* vain ;
but a woman *that* fear-
eth the Lord, she shall
be praised.

31 Give her of the
fruit of her hands ;
and let her own works
praise her in the gates.

II.
C O M M E N T A R Y.

COMMENTARY ON PROVERBS.

CHAPTER I.

I PROVERBS OF SOLOMON, SON OF DAVID,
KING OF ISRAEL.

THE Proverbs of
Solomon, the son of
David, king of Israel

WE see no sufficient reason for this not being thought the heading of all the book. Agur and Lemuel (30:1, 31:1, E. V.*), as will be seen in the sequel, are not writers who take the word out of the mouth of Solomon. A difference of dialect, even if thoroughly established, would not prove different authors, except in the way of original material. We are not bound to suppose that Solomon composed all the Proverbs, but only that he compiled all, and fixed upon all the sanction of an approving inspiration. Solomon, therefore, was probably responsible for all the work; and two other headings, (10:1, 25:1), (for after proper sifting there are but two), (see 24:23, 30:1, 31:1), both mention the name of Solomon, and both stand as under-titles to this one first heading, which may be properly thought comprehensive of the book. "**Proverbs.**" The Hebrew word is derived from a root that means either to *rule* or to *resemble*. No one can tell, therefore, whether the primary idea of a Proverb is that of being a *master sentence* or *maxim*, or a *parable* or *figurative speech*. "*Proverb*," in our usage, fails to be a perfect version of the Hebrew, because it means something bandied about and in everybody's mouth; while these may have been freshly composed and mean solely *apothegms* or *deep speeches*. Irrespective however of usage, "*Proverb*," (*proverbum* of the Latin), is a very good translation, because, as so terse and

* English Version ; or, Version of King James.

graphic as to be *proverbium* (*for*, or *instead of*, much verbiage), the form of speech being pregnant, and by some turn or trope crowding *multum in parvo*, the idea *pro verbo* or *pro verbis* answers very perfectly.

The beginning of the Proverbs has always seemed the most ragged part of them. Just where, starting fresh, the inspired writer might be expected to be most poised and perfect, he pours out according to all previous translations a perfect diarrhoea of prefaces or preliminary purposes. They have not the logic of a good order; they have not the linking of good grammar; in fact, they have not a substance of important sense. This incoherency reaches to the seventh verse, inclusive; and, if any one doubts what we aver, let him try to read that collection of texts, and give the syntax, and the logic, and the motive for such a loose-jointed catalogue. The meaning comes when we take the infinitives of the second, fourth, and sixth verses, and see how they are answered to by the assertions of the third, fifth, and seventh. There are three assertions or proverbs, therefore. Let us take the first:—

- 2 To know wisdom and admonition;
to put a distinct meaning into discriminated speeches;
- 3 to accept clear-sighted admonition,
is righteousness and judgment and right behaviour.

2 To know wisdom
and instruction; to
perceive the words of
understanding;

3 To receive the in-
struction of wisdom,
justice, and judgment,
and equity;

We might expect a proverb like this. It would be noble to find it just where we do. It is characteristic of Solomon to use a certain epithet. He calls the impenitent man *a fool*. All through Ecclesiastes and throughout the present book, the more mental aspects of sin are made always prominent. Piety is called wisdom. The saints are called the wise. We hear of the wise woman (14:1), and the foolish woman (9:13), of the capable woman (12:4, 31:10), and then of all the terms of knowledge (8:10, 12), and subtlety (8:12), and discernment (2:2, 3), of the prudent man (14:8, 15), and the empty man (12:15), and the stupid man (17:21, 24), respectively, as the saved and the lost; and nothing could be more natural than that just here there should be the broad assertion that *know-*

ledge is piety. Nothing could be more seminal. In the apostle's armour (Eph. 6:14) "truth" was the "girdle" that supported everything, and that, not spoken truth, which answered to the "sword of the Spirit," but inward truth. A new heart comes from a new light. The whole of piety is a light. If a man sees, he believes, he loves, he hopes, he serves, he repents, he rejoices; and this as but new forms of the one blessed illumination. "This is life eternal that they might know thee" (Jno. 17:3); and those are "chains of darkness" (2 Peter, 2:4) that bind the sinner through infinite ages. "**Wisdom;**" the commonest word for *piety* all through the book. "**Admonition;**" wisdom pressed practically on us in discipline. Next comes *spoken wisdom*;—"to put a distinct meaning into discriminated speeches." The Hebrew is much shorter—"to make discern speeches of discernment." The Hiphil, which this is, is usually translated as Kal, but not always (see Dan. 8:16. E. V.); and the fact that it cannot always be so translated, should make us look very narrowly whether it ever can. These causatives are usually chosen for a purpose (see also Prov. 28:7, 11.), and we ought always to look for this intenser meaning. A sense of discrimination belongs to the verb itself.. It is not to *know* simply, but to *distinguish*, as though from something else. The primary sense is to *separate*. To *make discernible*, therefore, as by this inward light, i. e., to *put a distinct meaning into*, (which the lost man cannot do), is a good force of the Hiphil. "**Discriminated;**" literally, (words) "of discrimination." It is a substantive from the same root. Instead of saying, therefore, "to perceive the words of understanding" (E. V.), we think it closer to the Hiphil, and deeper toward the root to translate—"to put a distinct meaning into discriminated speeches." "**Clear-sighted;**" from a root meaning to *look at*. "**To accept** (or take) *clearsighted admonition*;" a step forward in the thought: first to have this inward light, ("to know wisdom"); second, to see it in the guise of discipline, (to know admonition); third, to put a meaning into it when uttered in speech, (2nd clause v. 2); and fourth, to practice it when pressed in discipline, ("to accept clear-sighted admonition"). All this "**is righteousness and judgment and right behavior.**" "**Righteousness;**" literally *straightness*,

i. e. *holiness*—never perfect in this world. “*Judgment*;” the same viewed as an award; that God be just and yet make just or holy the subjects of His grace. Hence “*right behavior*.” One spark of light (what Solomon calls knowing wisdom) is in its very self three things; first, a subjective state; second, a forensic gift; and, third, a movement upon the will, effecting an outward betterment in living. The word “*Judgment*;” awkward, and rarely fitting well as an expression in the English (Eccles. 8 : 6; Is. 42 : 1, 3, 4), but meaning most strictly an *adjudging*, and rarely to be interpreted by any different expression. “*Right behavior*;” from a verb to be *level*; literally, *level things* (plural); sometimes translated *uprightnesses*; but, in default of some English trope, *levelnesses*, to denote proper minded behavior, the word we give may be as good as any. The first proverb, therefore, is the important announcement, that *wisdom is the same as piety*.

So much for ourselves; now, for others. The second proverb announces, that the true way to impart this wisdom to others, is to get overflowing with it ourselves:—

4 In order to give subtlety to the simple; to the child knowledge and thorough thought;

4 To give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.

5 the wise man will hear, and increasingly acquire; and a man already become discerning, will gain in capability to guide.

5 A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:

“*In order to*;” simply the preposition (*to*) as before another infinitive. “*To give subtlety to*;” the infinitive Hiphil of a verb to be *cunning*. *Cunning*, therefore, is another word for *piety*. *Piety* would not be a translation of the word; because there is intended to be implied the idea of *cunning*; but each of these words imply some characteristic of *piety*; and in this particular case it means to assert its innocent but supereminent *cunning* or *subtlety*. “*Simple*;” literally, *open*. The word will occur often. It means the impenitent; but it means the impenitent in the opposite aspect to *cunning*, viz.: of *openness*, or *exposure to being misled*. “*Child*;” or *youth*. It is a wider term than the English. “*Thorough thought*;” *deep calculation*;

rather (**נָ** prefix, see 4: 23, 26; 6: 19), the *result of deep calculation in well-formed purpose*. “Increasingly acquire ;” literally, “increase taking,” (i. e., *lessons*). “Already become discerning ;” Niphal participle of the verb to *separate*, already noticed (1: 2). “**Capability to guide** ;” literally “*helmsmanships* ;” derived from a root meaning *a cord*; i. e. the *rope of a rudder*. The word is plural, and occurs often (11: 14; 20: 18; 24: 6), being usually translated *counsel* (E. V.). The two verses, therefore, mean, that a man must become more pious to be more useful as a teacher of piety.

The third proverb has reference to Proverbs themselves. As (1) wisdom is itself piety, and, as (2) wisdom is the best equipment for teaching piety, so (3) piety or wisdom is the only equipment for understanding these proverbs.

- 6 For putting a distinct meaning into a proverb or an enigma;
into the words of the wise and their intricate things;
- 7 the fear of Jehovah is the main knowledge;

a wisdom and a discipline that fools despise.

6 To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.

7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

This, in one aspect, is truth just turned in the obverse direction. As a man must have light to have piety (vs. 3, 4), so a man must have piety to get more light. As “*to know wisdom* (v. 2) is right behavior,” so “right behavior,” or, as it is here called, “**the fear of Jehovah**,” is “*the beginning of wisdom*” (E. V.), and, more than that, the “**main**” thing in that “**knowledge**” by which “**intricate things**,” dark proverbs, are to be seen in their hidden meaning. This is a grand beginning for the book. He must be a good man who undertakes to understand it. This will confirm our theory, that these proverbs are selected for what is spiritual. If they are mere secularnesses, (or so even in a single instance), we do not need faith to understand them. Counted as all spiritual, Solomon agrees with Christ (Mark 4: 11), not only that parables and such like puzzling things, which are, perhaps, intentionally obscure, are best unravelled by the pious; but that even simple things are enigmas to the wicked. “To them that are without, all things are done (better, *come to be*), in parables.” As the Apostle says,—(1 Cor.

2 : 14) "The natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God." "**A proverb or an enigma;**" not "*a proverb and the interpretation*" (E. V.). This would be tautology. How can a man understand a proverb except as understanding its interpretation? The word "*interpretation*," (so rendered in the English,) comes from a root that means to *stutter*. It occurs but in one other place (Hab. 2 : 6), where it means "*mockery*"; as men often stutter where they would taunt or deride. In our text it means "*enigma*," as men speak darkly when they stammer out what they say. Divine teachers sometimes spoke mystically out of purpose (Ps. 49 : 4); more often the whole gospel is pronounced a "*mystery*"; not that it is not a simple system, but that it is spiritual, and so becomes a puzzle. As these Proverbs are laden with the gospel (21 : 4; 24 : 9; 28 : 13), the main key is "*the fear of Jehovah*," and very naturally, therefore, they have "**a wisdom and a discipline that fools despise.**" "**For putting a distinct meaning into,**" (see v. 2); Hiphil of the verb to *separate*. "**Intricate things;**" literally "*tangled*;" chiefly, however, "*tangled*" by the sinner. "**Despise;**" so ignorance becomes fixed. The *fool*, or impenitent man, does not possess "*wisdom*" or "*discipline*;" and is vastly hindered by a contempt for both of them.

8 Hear, my son, the admonition of thy father;
and repel not the direction of thy mother;

9 for a garland of grace shall these things be
for thy head,
and chains about thy neck.

8 My son, hear the
instruction of thy fa-
ther, and forsake not
the law of thy mother:

9 For they shall be
an ornament of grace
unto thy head, and
chains about thy neck.

In Scripture and that Oriental speech framed to be its vehicle, narrow examples stand often for a universal class. "Honor thy Father and Mother," means,—obey all superiors. "Thou shalt not steal," means,—keep clear of every fraud. "Thou shalt not commit adultery," means,—destroy in nothing thy neighbor's honor. In those patriarchal countries, obedience to a father was the finest model of subordination. When, therefore, the Ten Tables are supposed to be summed up by the fifth and the tenth commandments; our duty to Him above

us by the command,—Obey thy parent; and our duty to those about us by the command,—“Thou shalt not covet,” the idea is by no means fanciful, and may aptly reflect the meaning of our text. Let the child take the first and obvious meaning,—that he is to obey his father; but let the man look deeper. The earlier principles having been settled, the Proverbs have begun with a grand practical direction, that we are to listen to our teachers; that we are to begin at our fire-side, and obey all the way up to God. And the Wise Man garnishes it with a very noble truth,—that “*a garland of grace*” is the first thing in the scale of recompenses. He mentions other things,—life and eternal peace and an escape from wretchedness; but he puts this first. As Christ prays, “Hallowed be thy name,” (Matt. 6:9), as his first petition, so Solomon puts first in his promises mere beauty, the mere prize of being right; “*a garland of grace*,” i. e., a mere ornament. The best thing in being pious is the mere comeliness of piety. So that we must not consider it as a chance that the first reward that the Proverbs offer to the saint is the mere excellence of being excellent itself. “**Direction** ;” universally translated “*law*” (E. V.); nevertheless the divine *law* is much better answered to by several other expressions. This word comes from a root meaning to *throw*, and refers to the throwing out of the hand in giving direction. In some texts this sense is distinctly in view. We translate it always “*direction*.” In some texts we greatly gain by it. And in all there is more or less reference to a way, and a great naturalness in retaining the original interpretation. “**Grace** ;” not *graciousness*, but *gracefulness*; nevertheless, as in English, it is the same word that, standing in different texts, expresses these different ideas.

10 My son, if sinners would make a door of
thy simplicity,
afford thou no entrance.

to My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.

“**Make a door of thy simplicity** ;” literally, “*open thee* ;” hence (E. V.), “*entice thee* ;” meaning, *lay thee open*. The word “*simple*,” as we have already seen (v. 4), means *open*, and comes from this same root. We would translate “*entice*” (E. V.),

were it not for one fact:—the meaning to *open* has an echo to itself in the after clause. The word translated “*consent*” (E. V.) is the familiar verb to *enter*, and is found in the Hiphil. It means to *cause or suffer to enter*. It refers, of course, to the idea of being *laid open*. It is better, therefore, to throw all into the primary shape.—“*My son, if sinners would (open thee, i. e.,) make a door of thy simplicity, afford thou no entrance.*” One word more as to both these verbs. We have looked at all the twenty-eight places in which the first occurs in the Hebrew Bible, and it is true in every one that it is faithful to its meaning, which is to *be open*. In the Pihel it means *to open*, or *to lay open*, as in our text. In the Niphal it means *to be laid open*. (Job 31:9.) “If my heart was thrown open to a woman,” or, more literally, “for the sake of a woman.” The word meaning “*simple*” (v. 4), is, of course, no departure from this general sense of *open*. The Hiphil means *to make an opening*; and occurs but once (Gen. 9:27). “Jehovah shall make an opening for Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant.”* Our text, therefore, means, “if sinners would lay thee open” (to their influences), “afford thou no entrance.” Now as to the second verb.—It is supposed by the generality of scholars to be from a word meaning *to assent or incline to*: hence the English,—“*If sinners entice thee consent thou not.*” But it requires an alteration of the consonants to allow that word to come in. The word meaning *to enter* has the consonants already; and by taking the Hiphil, which means *to give entrance to*, or *to cause to enter*, which is the translation I have given, the word, almost without a change, is all *en regle*. “*My son, if sinners would make a door of thee.*” The passage begins with the mildest possible expressions. If it be

* This is itself a new rendering. We have no authority for such a sense. And the Hiphil is otherwise defined in the Lexicons. But we seem to be returning to the primary thought; and so apt a meaning would hold, one would think, upon the first suggestion. What more apt than this,—that Japheth, the enterprising brother of the three, and the father of the Caucasian race, should be described as pushing, or as making an opening for himself, into other people's dwelling-places or tents; or, to speak more dependently, having Jehovah to make it for him; pushing, as he has done, into the homes of Shem, and having Canaan for his servant? *Japheth* itself, moreover, is a Hiphil derivate, from the same verb, to *be open*. “*Jehovah shall make an opening for The Opener.*”

only by example or only by suggestion that the danger comes : if the sinner's sin, as he thinks, is only simplicity, or too much openness of spirit, then, *obsta principiis*. His duty is to resist. However insidious the approach, "afford thou no entrance."

¶ If they say, Come with us; let us lay
wait for blood;
let us lurk privily for those who are inno-
cent to no purpose;

If they say, Come
with us, let us lay wait
for blood, let us lurk
privily for the innocent
without cause;

It is very often the case in Scripture, that very violent pictures are drawn, which seem to denounce only the grosser form of criminality, when the intention is to sweep all in under the same general portraiture. When Christ says of the Scribes and Pharisees, that "within they are full of extortion and excess," he does not mean to forget how these Pharisees might be courteous and law-abiding citizens, but to show the enormity of just such men in a due consideration of their wickedness. In Isaiah (Is. 1: 21) the whole church seems to be arraigned as "murderers." In the Psalms, as Paul collects the testimony (Rom. 3: 13-15), all men answer to this horrid picture :—"Their throat an open sepulchre ; with their tongues having used deceit ; the poison of asps under their lips ; their mouth full of cursing and bitterness ; their feet swift to shed blood." When, therefore, the inspired Solomon draws another portrait of the enticement of the young man by the sinner, we are not to let it slide away as being an uncommon case; but are to understand that all the impenitent "**lay wait for blood**"; that all swallow men up alive as the grave, and that all are seeking for precious substance, not at the literal expense of murdering its possessor, but at the far more frightful cost of eternal damnation. "**Innocent to no purpose.**" That is, whose innocence will do nothing for them. Zöckler prefers the old rendering, "*without cause*," as applied to the wrong itself. But the position, as it often happens in a sentence, gives its connection to the word. The expression, "*innocent to no purpose*," is a very significant one in the text; and this meaning, *in vain or to no purpose*, is much the more frequent one in Scripture, and, on that account, the more likely in any sentence.

- 12 let us swallow them alive as Sheol,
and whole as those that go down into the
pit;
- 13 we shall find all precious substance;
we shall fill our houses with spoil;
- 14 thou shalt cast in thy lot among us;
we will all have one purse;

12 Let us swallow
them up alive as the
grave; and whole, as
those that go down into
the pit;

13 We shall find all
precious substance, we
shall fill our houses
with spoil;

14 Cast in thy lot
among us; let us all
have one purse:

Some translators give: “*Let us swallow them up as Sheol does the living; yea (men of whole character) the upright as those that go down into the pit.*” Mere euphony, however, is often a fair test of the sense. It is better for the adjectives to lie in the same line as objects. Moreover, “whole” includes all qualities,—whole in health, whole in property, whole in standing. It is proper to give a preference to the more comprehensive sense; when it stands as well in other respects as a translation. “*We shall find, etc.*” Greed and fraud can be found at heart even among the more amiable impenitent. “*Thou shalt cast in thy lot, etc.*” Our English version has it, “*Cast in thy lot;*” as an imperative. Men don’t *enter* among bandits in that way. It is the reward of what is done afterward. “*Thou shalt cast in thy lot;*” that is, when the prey comes to have lots cast for it. Hence an idiom, built upon this wrong translation, is a somewhat distorted one. We hear of *casting our lot*; of where Providence has *cast our lot*; a very inapt similitude, in this:—that the “*lot*” in Oriental speech *grew* to mean a possession that a man had taken by lot. To speak, therefore of *casting our lot* anywhere, is a distorted figure, and evidently comes from this wrong translation.

- 15 my son, walk not thou in the way with
them;
refrain thy foot from their path;
- 16 for their feet are running toward evil;
and they are making haste to pour out
blood;

15 My son, walk not
thou in the way with
them; refrain thy foot
from their path:

16 For their feet run
to evil, and make haste
to shed blood:

“**Evil** ;” evil of all sorts, but most prominently evil to themselves. “**Running** ;” don’t go “in the way with them,” because the eager enterprise they plan is really a “*running toward evil*.” “**Pour out**,” usually “*shed*” (E. V.); but here there is a strik-

ing *equivoque*. They shall indeed *shed blood* as they proposed (v. 11); but verse 18th is to declare that it is to be "*their own blood*." The innocent (v. 11) can't be injured (12:21). The saint is to grow by trial. Therefore the harm is to be their own. We translate "*pour out*," therefore; as "*shed*" (E. V.) from its more technical use is more restricted than the Hebrew.

This bold ruin their seeing it will never keep off:—

17 because it avails not that the net is spread |¹⁷ (Surely in vain the
in the very eyes of all the birds; |_{net is spread in the}
|sight of any bird:)

A meaning quite different from this has often been insisted upon. It has referred to the victims, viz.: the "*innocent*" (v. 11). It has been supposed to mean that birds, seeing a trap, would not go into it; and so the innocent would be vainly hunted after. As this is not according to nature, we thought at first that the last expression might be translated differently. "*Master of a wing*" is the Hebrew for "*bird*" (E. V.); but as the common word for *bird* means *a wing*, why might not this common word for *wing, poeice*, mean a *bird*. The meaning then would be singularly beautiful,—"*Let us lurk privily for those who are innocent to no purpose!*" Ah! But what about their Owner? Such answer would be complete. As a game-keeper would brush the snare that he found set for his birds: so the Great Lord in Heaven sees when our traps are set for us. The other case (Eccles. 10:20) where *master of a wing or master of wings (dual)* occurs, might half encourage the fancy. "A bird of the air (some carrier or parrot bird) shall carry the voice, and the owner of the bird ('that which hath wings' E. V. literally '*the master of the two wings*') shall tell the matter. On the whole, however, we reject this our first reading. Further search might confirm it: and specially a case in the Targum, or anything Rabbincal, where *wing* is used for *fowl*. The meaning would be an exquisite one; a cool taunt to the plotters of evil in view of the care of the Almighty. How foolish to set traps under the very eye of the Master of the birds! But, abandoning this sense, we must turn to quite a different one; not the idea

that a net is vainly set when the bird sees it (E. V.), but just the opposite, that in vain the bird sees it when it is set. These men are plotting with their eyes wide open. It teaches the great doctrine of the deliberateness of ruin. Men go to hell when they expect it; at least they go when it is a trap to them of which they know the setting. They go open-eyed on into the gin. As it avails not that the net is spread in the very sight of any bird, so it reckts not with these hardened men that they see the trap and talk of the pit into which their own madness may be hastening. This is most probably the meaning.

And it agrees very well with what follows:—

18 and these are laying wait for their own blood;

they are lurking privily for their own lives.

19 So are the paths of every one that seizes upon prey.

It takes away the life of him that gets it in possession.

18 And they lay wait for their *own* blood; they lurk privily for their *own* lives.

19 So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; *which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.*

“Of him that gets it in possession;” (literally, “*of the master of it.*”) This is the same word as in verse 17. The old translation reads,—“*Which taketh away the life of the owner thereof.*” But in addition to the fact that this would be a feeble ending to so strong a paragraph, it is really not so grammatical as ours. “*The master of it*” really means *the master of spoil*; and *the master of spoil is the spoiler*. The whole is a sovereign lesson;—that he that is trapping others, is trapping himself; that he that lurks privily for the saints, is lurking privily for God’s children; that it is impossible to hurt a righteous man; that it is so easy to hurt a wicked one, that the very business of his wickedness destroys him, (there is an emphatic pronoun (v. 18) *they themselves or they as wicked* lurk, etc.), so that, as wicked, he lays wait for himself; “**so are the paths of every one that seizes upon prey. It takes away the life of him that gets it in possession.”**

20 Out of doors, wisdom cries;
on the open squares she gives forth her voice.

20 Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets;

The fourteen verses (20–33) are a twin passage to the ten

verses (10-19) which precede. They recall the fabled choice of Hercules. The ten verses describe the solicitations of Sin; the fourteen, the invitations of Wisdom. These pictures are admirably in place at the opening of a book on piety. "**Wisdom;**" literally *wisdoms*. The Orientals used the plural as an expression of higher excellence. So *God*, throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, is generally in the plural. But water and heaven are plurals, doubtless for all water and all sky. God(s) may mean all Deity. And "*wisdoms*" may be plural, not simply to denote wisdom in the highest form, but wisdom in all forms, or all "*wisdoms*" in one; specially two forms of wisdom,—wisdom in a worldly sense, and wisdom in that spiritual sense which the natural man does not discern. Wisdom in both these senses unite in piety. That is, the pious man has spiritual wisdom, of which the sinner knows nothing; and the pious man has natural or fleshly wisdom, to avoid hell and to secure heaven, to provide for death and to get ready for the eternal world, to a degree altogether superior to a fleshly nature. "*Wisdoms*," therefore, connected, as it is, with the singular verb, and appearing, as it does, repeatedly in this book of Proverbs (9: 1; 14: 1; Ps. 49: 3), (and sometimes with a plural verb, Prov. 24: 7), is a very suitable name for piety. "**Out of doors wisdom cries.**" "*Out of doors*" and "*on the open squares*" are very emphatic ideas in this opening. Sin (v. 10) was represented as trying to get in. Wisdom is represented as trying to reach out. Sin is perfectly harmless, unless it can get into the conscience. Wisdom is utterly helpless unless it begins with the flesh. One strives to get in; the other yearns to reach out. The causes of this are obvious. So long as the enticements of sin do not reach in to the heart, the man is utterly unscathed. Therefore the Proverb reads, *My son if sinners would throw thee open, yield thou no entrance.* On the other hand, if piety cannot reach out, she is utterly unheard. "*The natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit.*" She must begin, therefore, without. The impenitent can only hear "*natural*" reasonings. "*The law is a school-master.*" The terrors of death are applied by the Almighty to draw us nearer **within**, and finally into the region that is spiritual. It is "*out of*

doors," therefore, that wisdom must lift up her voice. " *On the open squares.*" She must go out to the resorts of men. This word, which is found all over the Bible, is usually translated " *streets*." It meant, in fact, those open spaces that were usually about the gates (Deut. 13 : 16), which were sometimes in the heart of the city, and which were the squares where altars were set up (Ez. 16 : 31); where Mordecai was carried in triumph (Esther 6 : 9, 11); where temples erected their fronts (2 Chron. 29 : 4; Ezra 10 : 9); where travellers camped all night (Gen. 19 : 2; Judg. 19 : 15, 20); where justice was administered (Job 29 : 7; Is. 59 : 14); and where cattle and flocks were sometimes herded or confined (Ps. 144 : 14). It is translated " *streets*" nearly always in our English; sometimes " *broad ways*;" quite literally it means *broad places*, and will invariably bear the translation of " *open squares*;" for we have tried that translation in all the instances. Wisdom goes where all public matters go, to the great squares and places of business.

- 21 Where confusion is at its height she calls,
in the opening of the gates;
in the citadel she utters her words:—
- 21 She crieth in the
chief place of con-
course, in the openings
of the gates: in the
city she uttereth her
words, saying,

God leaves sinners unwarned nowhere. In the great central marts, some of the loudest warnings have to be listened to. " *Where confusion, etc.*;" derived from a word that sounds like our English *hum*; the Wall streets and hot centres of activity. There is an impression that conscience is deadened in such places; but when eternity is revealed, we believe that there will appear to have been a Providence, like that which works together for the good of the Christian, working together to rouse the impenitent; ("What could have been done more to my vineyard?" Is. 5 : 4); that when the impenitent pleads his distractions at the last, it will be shown him how his hottest tasks were fitted to lead him to the Saviour; how he was passed through all sorts of the most favorable warnings; how he illustrated every form of folly; and how the Most High pursued him with every appliance for his escape, warning him more loudly in the distractions of his work, than he would have

been warned just then in the most quiet corner. “**In the openings of the gates,**” where in Eastern cities there was a stretch of pavement (see v. 20), and where courts and business assemblages were usually to be met. “**In the citadel,**” literally, “*in the city;*” but as the city has been all along talked of, “*the city,*” as can be shown by usage (2 Sam. 5:7, 9), means “*the citadel.*” “**Utters her words;**” namely, the words that follow:—

- 22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity,
and scorners in their own case delight in scorning,
and fools hate knowledge?
- 22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

This brings out the second feature of impiety already hinted at (v. 7). The first feature of impiety was ignorance (v. 2, 3). Righteousness consisted in knowing wisdom. But along with this ignorance is a love of it, which makes it perpetual. The simple do not love simplicity on its own account; but for its indulgencies. They hate piety for what it forbids. This Christ teaches (John 3:19, 20). They love darkness rather than light because *their deeds are evil.* They hate light, neither come to the light lest *their deeds should be reproved.* St. Paul also (Rom. 8:7) gives the same reason. “The carnal mind is enmity against God.” Why? Not because a perfect Being is hated in Himself, but because He restrains men; “*because it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can be.*” “**The simple,**” therefore, are not only simple but averse. They are not so simple as not to get wisdom *if they would.* And, therefore, the appeal “**How long?**” Men are always going to be wise. And, therefore, *in medias res*, Wisdom plunges upon this very difficulty. You are going to repent; but when? And, as a still more imperative question, “**How long first?**” You are, perhaps, a grey old man; and your resolutions have been for fifty years. “**How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity, and scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?**” It will be seen that the person changes. The “scorners” and more determined haters are talked of, not to. There may be meaning in this. “**How long, ye simple?**” That is, in it;

milder form, impenitence may listen to wisdom; but the "scorner" is merely talked of. In this bolder attitude he may point a moral, but can never possibly be in the audience of Wisdom (see Matt. 7:6; 1 Jo. 2:11-14). "In their own case." A preposition with a pronoun. Men often are scorers themselves, when they are perfectly horrified at the scorning of others.

- 23 Would ye turn at my reproof?
behold, I would pour out my spirit upon
you;
I would make you know my words.

23 Turn you at my
reproof: behold, I will
pour out my spirit unto
you, I will make known
my words unto you.

"Turn, etc.;" not the imperative but the future interrogative. It would not answer as an imperative. The promise "*I will pour out my Spirit*" (E. V.) is a promise of absolute salvation. She does not promise the pouring out of her Spirit, that is, of God's Spirit, indiscriminately, but precisely on the condition that the future would give us; not "Turn ye! I will pour;" making the promise to pour commensurate with the command to turn; alas, that it might be so! but making the actual turning the condition, as well as the attendant of the promise, precisely in the way that is grammatical in our text. "Return unto me, and I will return unto you" (Mal. 3:7). The more we begin to listen, (though that needs the Spirit), the more the Spirit is poured out; and the bending of the ear instantly begins to unravel the words of Wisdom.

But not only the Spirit increases as our giving heed increases, but the Spirit recedes as our giving heed moves farther off. At last a boundary is passed from which there is no returning:—

- 24 Because I have called and ye refused;
I have stretched out my hand and no man
regarded;

24 Because I have
called, and ye refused;
I have stretched out
my hand, and no man
regarded;

It is astonishing how far this is carried! what myriads of rejections in a life of ordinary duration! how fair and reasonable the chance that has been given for our escape!

- 25 but ye have let go all my counsel;
and would none of my reproof;

25 But ye have set at
nought all my counsel,
and would none of my
reproof:

How natural, therefore, the doctrine that there comes a time when we have sinned away the day of grace! This is told in the saddest language in the texts that follow:—

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>26 even I, in the midst of your destruction,
 will laugh;
 I will mock when your fear enters.</p> <p>27 When your fear enters like a tempest,
 and your destruction comes like a whirl-
 wind;
 when distress and anguish come in upon
 you;</p> <p>28 then shall they call upon me, and I will not
 answer;
 they shall seek me diligently, and shall not
 find me.</p> | <p>26 I also will laugh
at your calamity; I will
mock when your fear
cometh;</p> <p>27 When your fear
cometh as desolation,
and your destruction
cometh as a whirlwind;
when distress and an-
guish cometh upon
you:</p> <p>28 Then shall they
call upon me, but I will
not answer; they shall
seek me early, but they
shall not find me:</p> |
|--|---|

In differences of translation from our common version, the new words put in will usually explain themselves. “**Let go all my counsel**” (v. 25), while it is truer to the root than “*set at naught*” (E. V.), is also truer to the facts. The verb means to *unbridle*, to *let go loose*; and the sinner in his earlier wanderings, rather *lets go* the counsels of wisdom, than actually *sets them at naught*. Our translations are made with care, however; and we will usually leave them to explain themselves. Now, as to the whole doctrine, it is a little strange. Does the sinner ever cry, and not get answered? Does he ever seek diligently, and God laugh at him? The passage is the profoundest gospel. A man has two ways of seeking,—before he becomes a Christian, and after he becomes a Christian. Before he becomes a Christian he seeks from *natural* motives; otherwise he would be already *spiritual*. We cannot say that *natural* seeking has no promise. We think it has. A man can only start outside of the camp to get in. The man who out of a deep sense of terror flies toward the wicket-gate under that schoolmaster the law, will reach it if he keep on; and that by promise. If he begs God to make him spiritual, and to give him the true motives of the kingdom with even a proper common spirit, though it be under the terrors of escape, he draws nearer all the time to being spiritual. The light will at last break. If he keeps

on in that way, he will emerge some day into the light of the blessed. The action of common grace will merge into that which is saving. But if his motives are too carnal; if his state is mere terror; if his moral part has been so abused that it has passed the boundary which our texts suggest; if there be the mere terror of the lost, and the mere selfishness, such as wakes up at the judgment day, we could easily understand that oceans of such tears would drift a man only farther off. They are only a more insidious carnality. The sum of the doctrine is, that *natural* motives may become instruments of conversion, if we seek God early; but if we sin away the day of grace, no terror, however selfishly and, therefore, passionately expressed, can become a saving prayer to bring us any nearer to the Redeemer. “**Even I.**” This emphasis must not be lost. It seems strange for Wisdom to laugh when the object is the perdition of a sinner: but here lies a deep reality. Saints will be able to rejoice even in sight of Tophet! “*Even I;*” *even Wisdom.* And let it be understood it is Wisdom that does the laughing. It will be the piety of men that will enable them to rejoice, even at eternal burnings. V. 28. “**Then shall they call.**” This change of person is not a mere graceful negligence, but a change of manner (see v. 22) as though Wisdom were increasingly alienated. “**They shall seek me diligently;**” usually “*early*” (E. V.) These men, however, had not sought “*early*.” The word has to do with *the morning*; but the earlier sense is *diligence* (see Gesenius), and by far the best sense in the present instance. “*They shall seek me diligently and shall not find me.*”

- 29 Forasmuch as they hated knowledge;
and did not choose the fear of Jehovah;
30 they did not want my counsel;
they despised all my reproof;
31 therefore do they eat of the fruit of their
way,
and are filled with their own counsellings.

| 29 For that they ha-
ted knowledge, and did
not choose the fear of
the LORD:
30 They would none
of my counsel; they
despised all my re-
proof.
31 Therefore shal-
they eat of the fruit of
their own way, and be
filled with their ows
devices.

“**Forasmuch as.**” Our English version connects this with what goes before. The usage of the word hardly warrants

this; and the sense makes it much better as the beginning of what follows. "*Forasmuch as they hated knowledge, etc.*" This not only marks the justness of refusing life to them who so long rejected it, but also the naturalness of the thing as a legitimate consequence. "**Their own way**" (v. 31) is the route that sinners take. "**The fruit of their own way**" is a very mixed metaphor, but means what the sinner wins to himself by the advance he makes upon his path. And *eating of that fruit*, and being *filled with it* are just the expressions to carry us back intelligently to the beginning of the passage. "*Forasmuch as they hated knowledge.*" This being the very way the sinner travels, they eat this, when they grow and are nourished in this hatred. The rejecting of "fear" and the declining of "counsel" and the despising of "reproof" are all "ways" the "fruit" of which a sinner "eats" when he is nourished and grows "filled" with these advancing and destroying impulses of spirit.

32 For the turning away of the simple slays
them,

and the tranquility of fools destroys them;

33 but whoso hearkens to me dwells safely,
and has been quieted from fear of evil.

³² For the turning
away of the simple
shall slay them, and
the prosperity of fools
shall destroy them.

³³ But whoso heark-
eneth unto me shall
dwell safely, and shall
be quiet from fear of
evil.

"**The turning away.**" When Wisdom calls, the "*turning away*" of sinners "**slays them.**" That is, not only as a just penalty, but, what is far more interesting, as a natural result. When sinners are moved a little by wisdom, and *turn away*, it is deadly. It is worse than if they had never listened. "**For**" connects this passage with the last; and it means that *turning away*, after being impressed by Wisdom, is one of the *ways* the "*fruit*" of which the sinner eats, and one which is utterly deadly. Nay; the inspired teacher makes it still stronger, for he says,—"**the tranquility**," that is, the mere standing at rest of "**fools**," the mere doing nothing of impenitent men, is carrying them downward; they have to make advance on their way, and that advance they "*eat the fruit of.*" "**Whoso hearkens to me dwells safely, and has been quieted from fear of evil.**" But the still dwelling and the quiet standing of the sinner is but a

progress downward. This is the warning to the impenitent. They *must* travel their way, and they *must* eat the fruit of it; and not only the turning away of the sinner slays him, but even his quiet destroys him.

CHAPTER II.

NEXT follows a wonderful passage. It has been strangely misinterpreted. It is a direction of a specific sort as to how a man may be converted. It is sad that it has not been always understood, that it might be availed of in public preaching. It contains two stages:—first the way to common grace; second, the way to complete salvation. What astonishes us in it is, that it is so specific. It treats being saved as though it were, like getting well or getting money, a matter of certain calculation. If we do certain things, the heart will move toward religion. If we do certain other things, the heart will go on in the quest, and will be certain to secure a change. Let us take the first stage first:—

- 1 My son, if thou wilt take my words,
and hide my commandments with thee,
- 2 so as to point thine ear toward wisdom,
thou shalt incline thine heart toward discernment.

My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;
So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;

The failure of other comments has been, that they have thrown the five verses into one; and the failure in that has been, that they have not noticed certain concluding clauses. The last clause of the second verse, like the last clauses in the preceding chapter (vs. 3, 5 and 7), has managed to conceal its character. The solution is, such a division into two stages. The sinner is taken at his lowest point, without waiting in the least for seriousness. In fact, he is told how he can become serious. “**My son, if thou wilt take my words.**” In any conceivable path, if thou wilt do that lowest conceivable thing,—just listen: and, that thy listening may not be a mere passing flash, if thou wilt pause upon it, and attend; if thou wilt “**hide my com**

mandments with thee;" the attention, however, being nothing more than listening; "*so as to point thine ear* (primarily *sharpen* or *prick* thine ear, like an animal) *toward wisdom*;" the heart is so constituted that it will at once begin to move. This is not insisted upon enough in preaching. Like a thermometer, the heart warms and rises at once at the touch of truth. This is a seminal principle. "Turn ye unto me and I will turn unto you" (Zech. 1:3). If a man takes a chair and thinks for a moment of death and judgment and eternity, his heart begins to feel, and it will go on feeling at any length. It requires the Spirit, no doubt; but what is the Spirit but the Spirit of the God of Nature? He will come in the track of thought just as surely as a star is dragged after Him in the track of gravitation. This is only common grace; but the Wise Man offers it as the foundation of the higher. Stop anywhere in thy track. *Prick thine ear toward wisdom, and "thou shalt incline thine heart to discernment."*" "*Incline*;" simply *bend*. Wait for nothing on earth. In the whirl of business, stop anywhere and think. The heart moves heavenward, like the mercury when your finger is on the bulb. Men send their hearts upwards this way myriads of times. If they cool again, they lose susceptibility. They do cool again often and often. The Wise Man does not pretend to deny it. He is stating simply a fact. Listen, and thou shalt begin to feel. Prick the ear, and thou shalt bend the heart. "*But if*" (בַּאֲنֵה v. 3). It is astonishing that this fresh departure has not been noticed:—

- 3 But if thou wilt cry after discernment,
and lift up thy voice for understanding;
- 4 if thou wilt seek it like money,
and dig for it as for hid places of store;
- 5 then shalt thou discern the fear of Jehovah,
and find the knowledge of God.

³ Yea, if thou criest
after knowledge, and
liest up thy voice for
understanding;

⁴ If thou seekest her
as silver, and searchest
for her as for hid trea-
sures;

⁵ Then shalt thou
understand the fear of
the LORD, and find the
knowledge of God.

Preliminarily (vs. 1, 2), if thou wilt listen, thou shalt begin to feel. "*But if*" thou wilt build upon this a still higher thing, it will bring actual salvation. Solomon aims to be methodic, as in trade or farming. The heart, being fitted by its sensitiveness when

we merely listen, is told how it may go on into a state of grace. “**If thou wilt cry after discernment.**” The heart, beginning by feeling, need but keep on with the earnestness of an eager cry. “**Understanding;**” for, as in the first chapter (2, 3), “knowledge” is “righteousness.” The sinner is held to his one want, and that is *light*. V. 4. “*If thou wilt seek it as money.*” So stands the whole doctrine. Men never prayed that way, and were not answered. Men seek money: first, always; second, as a matter of course; third, against all discomfitures; fourth, under all uncertainties. It is the rare exception where men are not busy seeking it from Monday to Saturday, in spite of every loss, and as a thing they must get, from actual necessities of nature. Now, religion, so chased after, may be won, clear of uncertainty. If any object that they are at a loss to begin, how can that be, if they are but to “*cry after*” it? Though, if they still speak of uncertainty, the Wise Man varies the figure:—“**If thou wilt dig for it as for hid places of store.**” With such enemies as those of Midian (Judg. 6 : 2, 11) the Israelites had to bury their crops to hide them from being robbed. To unbury them required plenty of waste digging. The robber must dig and dig, and unearth many a place with the futile labor of finding nothing. So the lost must do. What is hunting, but searching many a spot before the true one? V. 5. “**Then;**” the word is very emphatic. “**Shalt thou discern;**” the idea of *light*, we are to observe, is still kept in the fore-ground. The “**fear of Jehovah,**” i. e., piety. “**And find the knowledge of God;**” that is, like “*hid places of store;*”—the whole a grand offer to everybody; and a grand counsel as to the way to be converted.

- 6 For Jehovah gives wisdom,
out of His mouth knowledge and discern-
ment;

6 For the Lord giv-
eth wisdom: out of his
mouth cometh knowl-
edge and understand-
ing.

Hardly has the Proverb let go the thought that a man may be certain of conversion, before he brings in the twin thought, “**Jehovah gives wisdom.**” It is so universally. A superb passage those five verses are (2 : 1-5), and teaching plainly the fact that a man may get “*light*,” and that there are steps to it like money-getting; and yet, hardly have the words left his lips, be-

sore Solomon guards them, "*Jehovah will give wisdom;*" and guards them in a striking way; for he says, "**For:**" that is, the fact that it is the gift of God is the reason that it can be proceeded after hopefully by man. His great direction was,— "If thou cry after" it. And as this implies some one to answer the request, it is thus also apposite to say, "*For Jehovah will give.*" "**Out of his mouth,**" ("will give," being understood); their being nothing further to remark on this verse than that it still harps upon "knowledge and understanding," in the tone of the first Proverb, that "righteousness" is "knowledge;" but further that it adds, "*out of his mouth.*" God does give wisdom, but He gives it by intelligent means. He does convert the sinner, but He does it by the enginery of truth. He is the prophet of the Church, and He is so not simply by the inward grace, but by that with the outward word upon the reason and intelligence of the believer.

7 and He stores up something stable for the upright,
a buckler to them of sound behavior.

He layeth up
sound wisdom for the
righteous: he is a
buckler to them that
walk uprightly.

"*He hides away;*" "**He stores up;**" literally, the same verb of which "hid places of store" is a derivative. Not only does He "give Wisdom," (see the last verse), but He *hides away* what will be stably certain and complete. "*Hide;*" first, that the wicked will not find it; second, that the righteous may have to dig to get it; nevertheless, third, that it may be safe from the Evil One, and may be found by the righteous, as he advances to his final kingdom. "**Something stable.**" We have turned to the twelve places where this word occurs. It is a very peculiar word. It is translated "*sound wisdom*" (E. V.). Such is a translation that is very distant. "*Sound Wisdom*" leads to what is stable, but so do other things. The verb which is evidently its original, is an unused verb, and means "*to stand.*" A word of multiplied use that means "*there is*" or "*it is.*" **שׁתַ** is the commonest derivative. The word in our text, therefore, having a somewhat causative form, is something that *stands* or *causes itself to stand*, and this fits all the cases in which it is used in Scripture. For example (Job 5:11), "Their

hands cannot perform *anything stable*."^{*} (Job 30:22), "And thou hast melted me away as to *anything stable*."[†] (Prov. 8:14). "Counsel is mine and *something stable*."[‡] So here, "he stores up *something stable for the righteous*;" meaning that in the last outcome of his believing people what he has hidden away for them will stand, so as to be permanently complete; "**a buckler**," therefore, in all the gloomy horrors that beset the future.[§]

There follows now a theological account of *why* He must look after the righteous:—

- 8 To keep watch over the paths of judgment | 8 He keepeth the
He must also guard the way of His saints. | paths of judgment, and
preserveth the way of his saints.

"Judgment." By looking at all the passages we are convinced that there should rarely be any other rendering. When a court has been sitting, it reaches a "*judgment*." When a "*judgment*" has been rendered, it must be strictly executed. "**The paths of judgment**" are the roads that God must walk in executing the decrees of court. "*The paths of judgment*" in respect to Satan, lead God in all those hair-breadth measurings in which he metes out justice to him forever. "*The paths of judgment*" in the respect of Gabriel, correspond in the way of recompense; but as the difference Gabriel must be steadily raised up, and Satan steadily sunk lower. These are simpler verdicts. But in the instance of the "**saints**," "*the paths of judgment*" are much more complex. "In the way of His judgments we have to wait for Him," as Isaiah expresses it (Is. 26:8); and the verdict gotten for the sacrifice of Christ tracks out a "*path of judgment*" that is much more intricate for the Almighty. That we be all right in the end, "*Something stable*" must be hidden for us; but in the meanwhile He has to "**guard the way of His saints**." We have certain vicarious rights. One is, to come out all well if faithful. Another is, that no evil shall happen to the righteous. Another is, that

* (E. V.) "Their enterprise." † (E. V.) "Thou dissolvest my substance."

‡ (E. V.) "Sound wisdom." § "A buckler to them of sound behavior;" literally, "walkers of uprightness, or wholeness."

we may grow up in Christ, increasing day by day. To realize each and all is required of God. The track this takes Him into for all is, as to each man, His path of judgment. Each such path He must walk in strictly. To do so, He must watch the saints. And, therefore, the linking of this great gospel text :—“*To keep watch over the paths of judgment, he must also guard the way of his saints.*”

9 Then shalt thou put a distinct meaning upon righteousness and judgment and uprightness,—the whole good track.

9 Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea every good path.

This is a plain inference from the last. The word is “*then*;” and it seems not amiss to retain it. The meaning is, that while God, to keep the paths of judgment, is led necessarily to keep the way of His saints, “*then*,” the saints, (“*thou*” thyself, if thou wilt become a saint by crying after knowledge, see v. 3), shall receive these important benefits. “**Righteousness and judgment and uprightness;**” much the same as in chap. 1 : 3. “*Righteousness*,” viz., all moral excellence; “*judgment*,” viz., the judgment founded upon it; and “*uprightness*,” viz., the sanctified out-flowings in acts and all one’s personal behavior. To know these is called (very expressively) “*the whole good track.*” “*Track*,” that is to say, track for a *wheel*. The original means to *roll*. The Christian’s path is a *rut* or definite *tracking*. And the word is brought back afterward, and employed as to the sinner. He has a *track* just as definite, but we are told (v. 15 and v. 18) that it is both crooked and desperate.

10 Because wisdom enters thy heart,
and knowledge is pleasant to thy soul,
11 reflection shall watch over thee,
discernment shall guard thee.

10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart,
and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul.
11 Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee;

“**Because**,” not “*when*,” as in the English Version. “**Enters thy heart:**” again a grand theology! We often wonder at the holiness of heaven. It must be like a clock, right forever. A single tick aberrant! nay, the thought of it! makes us nervous

for the consequence. The “secret” why there shall be no such thing, is that wisdom *has entered into the heart*. They may make mistakes in heaven; but so long as wisdom is *in the heart*; so long as “**knowledge is pleasant to thy soul**,” thou canst not sin, because sin must be of the heart. So long as love of holiness, (and that is the same as love of light or spiritual “*knowledge*,” 1 : 3), so long as wisdom has possession of “the heart,” it is impossible to sin, and “perfect love” will cast out even the “fear” of it (1 Jo. 4 : 18). Therefore, “**reflection shall watch over thee; discernment shall guard thee**,” if thou hast reached a point where holiness has even so much as *entered*. The man who has let knowledge come *into his heart*, does but watch afterward as he does in common walking; and “*reflection*” will keep him straight; thoughtfulness will reason out the proper attitudes. And the chapter goes on now to two striking cases where “discernment” watches over a man. They are cases sadly blundered. They are instances bereaved, by usual criticism, of all their value. But they are cases where the mere grammar of the text need but be rigidly observed. By preserving this we get the same inference from both, viz.: that the very madness of sin, like the jolts and knots upon a pavement, may be so seen by the saint, that, if “*wisdom*” is “*in his heart*,” he will by “*reflection*” escape from wickedness:—

- | | |
|--|---|
| 12 To deliver thee from the way of evil,
from the man that utters upturning things,
13 those that forsake level paths
to go in the ways of darkness,
14 who rejoice to do evil,
exult in the upturnings of evil;
15 who are crooked in their own paths,
and turned off of their own tracks. | <small>12 To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things;</small>
<small>13 Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness;</small>
<small>14 Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked;</small>
<small>15 Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths:</small> |
|--|---|

“**To deliver**;”—to *snatch*, as we would a brand. “**The way of evil**.” The terms begin gently. It is only the gentle aspects that are dangerous at first. These are so fascinating that it requires us to be *snatched* to keep us out of the ways of darkness. But the wise man declares that this is accomplished by

the very madness of the end of the wicked. *To snatch thee from the way of evil ; those that forsake level paths* are soon observed *exulting in the upturnings of evil*. It is these extreme results that deter the saint (see Prov. 14:7). The man who has wisdom at all in his heart will see when it comes to joy at serious "upturnings," how loathsome the sinner is. Nay, when he sees the sinner admitting this, admitting that a course is utterly *upturning*, and yet rejoicing in it; when he, therefore, is crooked in his own paths; that is, don't walk where he himself approves, and is turned off of his own track, these are the great hieroglyphic notes by which the righteous keep away from him. Sin demonstrates itself by not keeping to its own intended track. And this is the warning for the righteous man. "Level paths ;" usually translated "paths of uprightness." (E. V.) But it is well to adhere to what is primary when it will answer, and that is "paths of levelness." It will be seen that this connection is had by simply observing the grammar. "*To deliver thee, etc.*," is made by our English version to connect with what goes before, but in that case "*that forsake, etc.*," (v. 13) must agree with "*man*" (v. 12), i. e., a plural with a singular. "*Who rejoice, etc.*" (v. 14) must stand in apposition with "*delight in,*" i. e., a participle with a future; with an "*and,*" to connect them, which is not found in the text.

The next passage, also, by moving smoothly with the grammar, admits a twin interpretation:—

- 16 To deliver thee from the strange woman,
from the stranger that flatters with her
speeches,
17 she who forsakes the guide of her youth,
has also forgotten the covenant of her God.

16 To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flatters with her words ;
17 Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God.

To read it, as is usually done, "*which forsaketh*" (v. 17) is made to agree with "*and forgetteth*," i. e., a participle with a Kal Perfect, binding us also to prolong, in a very unusual way, the conclusions from the earlier part of the chapter, and to have really no grammatical connection at all for the twentieth, and little that is logical for either the twenty-first or twenty-second verses. "*To deliver thee from the strange woman*," she

herself affords the means by showing her perfect abandonment :—

- 18 Because she has sunk down to death as to her house,
and to the shades as to her paths,
19 none that go in to her return again,
or overtake the paths of life ;
20 for the very purpose that thou mayest walk
in the way of the good,
and keep the paths of the righteous.

18 For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.

19 None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.

20 That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous.

"The guide of her youth;"—her husband; see Jer. 3:4, where God is represented as the husband of Israel. “Thou art the guide of my youth.” V. 18, “**Sunk down as to her house.**” We infer this because “house” is masculine, and this verb feminine. “House” in the East meant *interests*; a man’s whole blended well-being. “I will build him a sure house” (1 Ki. 11:38). “The house of the wicked shall be overthrown” (Prov. 14:11). “It came to pass because the midwives feared God, that He made them houses” (Ex. 1:21). “*Sunk as to her house to death,*” means lost to every interest. “**The shades,**” i. e., the dead. “**Shall return again.**” Dead souls are hopeless like dead bodies. This much good is ordered out of it, viz., that it shall be a warning to the righteous. “**Or overtake;**” not, “*take hold of*” (E. V.). “*Overtake*” is the meaning of the original. It means ground lost that cannot be recovered. And there follows the whole object of the exhibition:—“**That thou mayest walk,**” etc. This is a grand, pregnant doctrine. The wicked are lost partly to save the righteous. Races have apostatized for final lessons to the universe. This bad life was abandoned to its worst partly as a lesson. Resuming the whole:—“Because wisdom enters into thine heart,” after that, “reflection shall preserve thee.” Once “knowledge” become “pleasant unto thy soul,” the ways of evil will be only warnings. To snatch thee from the bad man’s influence, there shall be the warning of his very wickedness; and to snatch thee from the strange woman, the mere picture is enough,—that “**None that go into her return again,**” and that she has sunk in all her interests to the very dead. The doc-

trine of this Commentary is to be, that the Strange Woman is an emblem of Impenitence. This passage means the seductiveness and yet the self-betraying wretchedness of Impenitence. The woman who has left her husband has also left her God; and the *nulla vestigia retrorsum* witnessed in her dupes, is the warning for the saint by which he keeps clear of her undoing. No man would err who would treat of adultery as having its lessons here. But no man would understand the passage who did not understand it further as a great picture of Impenitence. The warnings to the saint are two:—first, the un-stopping-short character of sin: she who wrongs her husband will be seen universally wronging God; and second, the unrecuperative history of the lost. “*None that go into her return again, or overtake the paths of life.*” We will have a better opportunity to show that the Strange Woman is Impenitence, just as the Wise Woman (14:1) is Piety, and as the Termagant Woman (21:9, 19) is Impenitence in its bitter guise, as we advance more deeply in the Proverbs.

“**For**,” the Wise Man goes on to say,—the very earth casts out the wicked. The wicked were cast out of Canaan. The Israelites became wicked and were cast out in turn. Remaining in the land became a type of prosperity. The word “land” in Hebrew is the same word that is translated “earth.” The whole has a typical meaning. This earth, as many now-a-days conjecture, is to be restored as heaven. In that event, the old Canaan types will be very perfect:—

- 21 For the upright are to inhabit the earth,
and the men of integrity to be left in it;
22 but the wicked are to be cut off from the
earth,
and the faithless to be swept away out of
it.
- 21 For the upright
shall dwell in the land,
and the perfect shall
remain in it.
22 But the wicked
shall be cut off from
the earth, and the
transgressors shall be
rooted out of it.

“**Swept away.**” Zöckler says, “inasmuch as the parallelism requires a passive verb, and no verb **הַמְלָא** exists as the basis for the assumed passive, we must probably read with Hitzig, etc.,” that is, change the Hebrew. Let me rather ask,—why not take **הַמְלָא**? Such a verb does exist. It means to “*sweep away.*” It occurs Ez. 26:4. Its passive would be much the form, and its mean-

ing would be much the best for all that other commentators have aimed to get from other derivations.

CHAPTER III.

- 1 My son, forget not what I direct,
and let thy heart watch my commandments;
- 2 for length of days and years of life
and prosperity shall make thee greater.

My son, forget not
my law; but let thine
heart keep my com-
mandments:
2 For length of days,
and long life, and
peace, shall they add to
thee.

“Forget not.” In this first verse lingers the idea, which we have already encountered in chapter second (vs. 1, 2), that if we will watch the divine direction, and keep it in our memory, it will bend our heart to it. We cannot change our heart, except by bringing the truth to it, and keeping it there under the blessing of the Spirit. We are so constituted that we will turn to the truth by the Spirit, if we remember it, and keep it on our conscience. The passage, therefore, proposes only what is, instrumentally, our part:—“*Forget not what I direct, and let thy heart watch my commandments.*” “*What I direct;*” *my direction* or “*law*” (E. V.); primarily, *throwing*; then, *throwing out*, alluding to the *throwing out* of the hand, i. e., to show the way. We translate, *my direction*, or “*what I direct*,” because it keeps up the root; because it fits best the sense; and because it does uniformly well in other instances (see 4:2; 7:2). **“Watch.”** The English Version has it “*keep*.” But the word primarily means to look *hard at*, and generally to *keep watch over*, as over a vineyard. The fault of men is, they can’t *mind* “*what is directed*,” or remember it; and, therefore, the order is very pregnant, to *watch* it, as the occasions occur in which it can be applied. Nor ought we to dismiss this with a single mention. It seems very radical. The difficulty even of a single prayer is to “*watch*” well, and to keep remembering what we are to do. The difficulty of all our lives is to watch well our whole behaviour. **“Guard”** and “*watch*,” therefore, two Hebrew words, are sprinkled all over the book. It is a mannerism; and, in this inspired authorship, the mannerisms of

Solomon are nearly all significant. One Proverb (4:26) tells us that if we will watch the planting of our foot, the whole of our way will be set in order. And this thought, endlessly repeated, fills the Proverbs. V. 2. "*For length of days, etc.*" It may seem Quixotic; but such texts in our usual versions ought all to be altered. There are so many of them, that this ruling might seem to fall by its own weight. But where is the consistency of promising long life to wisdom? Where is the truth of such an assurance? And, with the great riches and great honors with which this promise seems often associated, where is the point of agreement with that, which, however, we think an equally mistaken idea, viz., that the poor are the great subjects for the gospel? To say that allusion is had only to the tendencies of things, is an undesirable solution, unless we feel compelled to accept the usual translation. The case of Paul and of many poor saints is a very awkward one, seeing that they may have been neither rich nor long-lived. We claim clean-cut texts; and that a Proverb is no vehicle for mere "*tendencies*"; and, therefore, if we had no other reason, we should look keenly for another sense. But the grammar punctually steps in to deliver us from all the instances. To our surprise and delight the Hebrew changes every one of them. We have not the warrant of authority; but we will, for the moment, freshly translate all such texts; and then, when we come to each, if they occur in the Proverbs, give the evidence in point (as we do now with this one) in the usual criticism. The passage reads in our Bible:—"Length of days and long life and peace shall they add to thee." But now, in addition to this being so poor a promise to be put the first in so grave a passage; and in addition to the truth that it is only the *tendency* to long life that can, at all, be pleaded, comes the fact, that certain endings give us immediate signs of another interpretation. The verb "*add*" is masculine; the words "*law*" and "*commandments*" are feminine. On the contrary, all are masculines among the nouns of the next clause. Unless there should be reason to do violence, by an ungrammatical exception, these nouns should be the subjects, rather than the objects, of the verb. We translate, therefore, "*For length of days and years of life and prosperity shall*

add," etc. But now, still more to the point, the verb "*add*" in this particular part (the Hiphil) does not mean usually to *annex*, or *give to*, as the English Version would imply, but it means to *make increase for*. That is why the preposition (בְּ) is used. The old version, therefore, is not correct. The idea is not of giving length of days, or *adding years of life*, but of something that *makes increase for thee* or *makes thee gainer*. The idea of the whole passage is, that if a man will remember the law, and let his heart watch the commandments, then length of days and years of life and prosperity, (which corrupt the wicked,) will give him increase or *make him greater*. The wildness in all this might seem to be in the weight of passages to be overcome. But now for the list. The finding of but one where Wisdom does promise long life to the sinner; that is where, as the investigated fact, grammar does not interpose, and there is nothing to side with our view, and to open a new interpretation, ought, of course, greatly to shake us, and to throw a strong suspicion on all our renderings. The passages are these (chap. 3 : 16) "Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left riches and honor." (4 : 10), "Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings, and the years of thy life shall be many." (9 : 11), "For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased." (10 : 27), "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened." (Ps. 21 : 4), "He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days forever and ever." It would seem *prima facie* to the last degree incredible, that none of these passages give a promise of long life; and the more so, when every commentator supposes it to be done by all of them; but certainly the aspect changes when there is found lurking in every one a different, but immediate, proof, that something fails to be smooth under the old interpretation, and that grammar, rigorously applied, traces out a new sense, and that of a corresponding sort, in all of them together. Let us retranslate the list, and then, as they come up *in situ*, we can afford the separate explanations. The first is (3 : 16), "Length of days, etc." That is so soon to occur (v. 16) that we will postpone it till it comes in place. The others we translate as follows: (4 : 10), "Hear, O my son, and

take my words, and they shall grow greater to thee through years of life." (9:11), "For by me thy days shall become great, and they shall make thee greater through years of life." (10:27), "The fear of Jehovah makes great days; but the years of the wicked shall be made little." (Ps. 21:4), "Life he asked of thee! Thou gavest him! Through length of days forever and forever." This last might seem to cause no interference, for it is Messianic, and might really mean long life; but the inspection of the grammar of all has really surprised us; for, irrespective of any theory of sense, there is always at hand some strongly modifying peculiarity. To return to our text; if we forget not the law, but watch the commandment, length of days and years of life and prosperity shall but make us greater. "**Prosperity.**" The word is usually translated "*peace*." The idea has been, that it sometimes means "*prosperity*"; but that it means so because "*peace*" necessarily leads to that. Probably it is just the opposite. It means, originally, *wholeness, soundness*. It means *prosperity* before it means *peace*. It should be translated "*prosperity*" in this passage, and in many others of a like kind in the Word of God.

- 3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee.
Bind them upon thy neck;
write them upon the tablet of thy heart.
- 4 And thus find favor and good intelligence
in the eyes of God and man.

3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the tablet of thine heart:
4 So shalt thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

"**Mercy and truth.**" These words are thus linked so often in Scripture, that we might suspect a logical connection. They correspond to the two tables of the law. There are two virtues possible to men,—benevolence and a love for what is right. Benevolence is at the bottom of the command, Thou shalt love thy neighbor; and what is right is that great glory which we are to love in God. "*Mercy and truth*," therefore; mercy as the great Benevolence, and truth as the moral light that we are to love in the Almighty, are the great objects that are to be near us everlastingly. It is fit that Solomon should call holiness, truth, inasmuch as he calls righteousness, knowledge, (1:2, 3). "*Let not mercy and truth forsake thee..*" The

idea implied is, that they come to the sinner, and place themselves continually within his reach, but that they can be grieved away. The Quaker doctrine of an inward light has a great truth aback of it. Solomon has already said,—If thou wilt point thine ear to wisdom, thou shalt incline thine heart to understanding; as though wisdom were always speaking. This is the true light, says John, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world (Jo. 1:9). Wisdom, in these two shapes of "Mercy and Truth," is always pressed upon men; and so, therefore, is all of piety; for they answer to all, because they embrace all, the commandments of the moral law. "**Bind them upon thy neck;**" i. e., as thy great ornament and glory (see 1:9). We have already said that Solomon puts first the fact that wisdom is itself a good; so Christ, as his first petition, prays,—"Hallowed be Thy name." "It shall be an ornament of gold, etc." "Mercy and truth" are to be sought on their own account. "**Bind them upon thy neck,**" i. e., as thy great glory. "**Write them, etc.**" This is something quite different. "**Bind them,**" as glorious in themselves. "**I Write them,**" as efficacious upon thy spirit. **The tablet of (the) heart** and the Two Tables are type and anti-type. Those Moses first received are man fresh from his Creator, rock and writing all in place, and so made and so sent down together. The last were common rocks brought up to the mountain which God wrote on after the first were broken, lost humanity writ on by the finger of God (Heb. 8:10). "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." Surmounted by the mercy seat these rocks remained as a type of sanctification. They were kept perpetually in ebony as a type of their being stored forever. "The golden pot," as a type of Redemption; Aaron's rod, as a type of Adoption, and the Two Tables, as a type of Sanctification. The first had the bread of Christ (Jo. 6:48); the second was our kingly sign; the third was our flinty nature; this last written on by the word. The way in which a sinner is converted is to have "Mercy and Truth" inscribed upon his heart, that he may discern their glorious excellence. V. 4. "**And thus find, etc.;**" literally, "**and find**" (imperative) "**Favor and good intelligence.**" The things found seem to agree with the means to find them.

"Favor" seems to agree with "mercy;" "good intelligence" with "truth." Philosophic order seems never to desert the Proverbs. "Mercy and truth," being grafted inwardly, are made to beget grace and "good intelligence." That is, the man who admires "mercy," gets mercy, and the man that aspires to "truth," gets "good intelligence;" "in the eyes," that is, in the opinion, both of "God and man." The "favor," therefore, is the favor that God counts favor; and the "intelligence" is "good," and good in the sight of God. That is, the intelligence is itself of value; and this agrees with all our doctrine of Heaven, which is, that Heaven is a condition of light; that God is the portion of the Christian; and that light to see Him is not only the efficient means, but the sufficient end of all one's felicity in seeing the Almighty. He that seeks "mercy and truth," therefore, gains "favor and good intelligence," the meaning being that it is itself a good, and itself a good both before God and man.

- 5 Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart
and lean not to thine own understanding.
- 6 In all thy ways do thou recognize Him
and He shall Himself level thy paths.
- 7 Be not wise in thine own eyes.
Fear Jehovah and depart from evil.
- 8 Let there be healing to thy muscles,
and moisture to thy bones.

5 Trust in the **LORD**
with all thine heart;
and lean not unto thine
own understanding.

6 In all thy ways ac-
knowledge him, and he
shall direct thy paths.

7 Be not wise in
thine own eyes; fear
the **LORD** and depart
from evil.

8 It shall be health
to thy navel, and mar-
row to thy bones.

There is so much in this chapter to show that length of days advances us (if we are Christians), and that by laws that are constitutional and divine, that it seems obvious that we should trust the Divinity and not anxiously and, therefore, painfully, and, in the end, wastefully, and with no result, put our trust in ourselves. V. 6. "**In all thy ways do thou recognize Him;**" (literally, "**know him;**") "recognize" rather than "acknowledge" (E. V.), because *acknowledge* means to *confess*. We are to "know" and actively "recognize" and *regard* God in all our action. "**He shall Himself,**" i. e., by his own Spirit. There is an emphatic pronoun. When we walk, it is not we that walk, but God. "**He shall Himself level thy paths.**" Not simply "direct" (E. V.) not even *make straight*; but *make smooth*.

This is the primary meaning. "The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness." He who seizes upon God, and makes Him the recognized One in all his history, walks a Divine walk, and feels a Divine foot walking for him and levelling all his goings. V. 7. "**Be not wise in thine own eyes.**" Be as wise as thou art able. Men use such texts as an excuse for drivelling. Get all the wisdom thou canst. That is the very burden of these Proverbs. But as thou gettest it, if thou seemest wise, be sure that thou art weighed down with folly. Gabriel who has never sinned, is foolish because he knows not the end from the beginning, and we are foolish for a further cause, that our wisdom has remains with it that are corrupt. We are poor sinners. There is but one rule for us.—"**Fear Jehovah and depart from evil.**" In the darkest night, that will answer; "**Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart, and lean not to thine own understanding.**" There are two sadnesses that flow from the opposite behavior—*worn muscles and dried bones*. The two are perfectly distinct. One means *aching labor*; the other *horrible despondency*. The lost are encouraged to "*fear Jehovah*" that they may be delivered from both. Our work is to be brought more to the pattern of Heaven, where it is perfect rest. "**Depart from evil.**" "**Let there be healing to thy muscles and moisture to thy bones.**" The beautiful feature of all this is its completeness. Heal a man's muscles and moisten his bones, and you touch his two great sorrows. You give him the rest and the trust that come from the Almighty.

9 Honor Jehovah from thy substance
and from the first of all thine increase;
10 and thy storehouses shall fill with plenty,
and thy presses burst with new wine.

9 Honor the LORD
with thy substance,
and with the first-fruits
of all thine increase:
10 So shall thy barns
be filled with plenty,
and thy presses shall
burst out with new
wine.

"**Honor**," employed often in connections like this, grew to include the idea of giving. Perhaps this very Proverb helped to bring this about. We see it in the Greek (1 Tim. 5:3). "**Honor widows that are widows indeed;**" i. e., *pay them*. (1 Tim. 5:17) "**Let the elders that rule well be accounted worthy of double honor.**" (Acts 5:2) "**Kept back part of the price,**"

(literally “*honor*.”) So (Acts 19:19) “They counted the price,” viz., the *honor*. “The first” has the blended meaning of the *first* and the *best*. The “beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 9:10) includes both ideas, and appears to alternate between them in our English version (Prov. 4:7). V. 10. “And thy storehouses, etc.” Being watered if we water others (11:25) seems more than a mere ‘tendency.’ It is almost an invariable sequence. Of course, heavenly rewards will follow, but earthly rewards are strangely assured to us. “Burst.” Some would say, “flow over.” But the hissing and bursting of the new grapes seem to have given the picture of the bursting out of the wine, without supposing the bursting of the wine-press.

Having stated the blessings of wisdom, it is logical to consider the apparent exceptions. The world is full of calamity:—

- 11 My son, shrink not from the discipline of Jehovah,
and be not revolted at His correction.
- 12 For whom Jehovah loves He corrects,
and, as a father, does the son a favor.

| 11 My son, despise
not the chastening of
the LORD, neither be
weary of his corre-
ction:
12 For whom the
LORD loveth he cor-
recteth, even as a fa-
ther the son in whom
he delighteth.

“Shrink not.” The word describes remarkably the exact temptation. It means *to melt*. The idea is, that the Christian shrinks under trouble, and has not thought enough to inquire its object. “The stone which the builders shrank from” (Ps. 118:22); that is, as too troublesome to serve their end. “Because this people shrink from the waters of Siloah,” i. e., His gentler punishments. (Is. 8:6) “Because thou hast shrunk from the word of Jehovah” (1 Sam. 15:23.) We are so absorbed by household and personal trouble, that the palsied spirit has no thought as to why it has been sent. Neither *be revolted*; (*nauseated* is perhaps the original sense). The Wise Man could hardly have been more graphic. For these two feelings are the uppermost when we are tried. An arrow falls, and we are either too shrinking to take thought of anything beyond, or too much surprised to be at all submissive under its infliction. “Think it not strange” (1 Pet. 4:12), the apostle says. In Hebrews (12:5) Paul quotes our present Proverb, but of course from the Septuagint. “My son, *despise not thou*, (literal-

ly, do not make little of), the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him." V. 12. "**For whom Jehovah loves, he corrects.**" How much more thorough this, than to say,—'It is a blessing.' This goes down to the roots of the influence. If God really "loves" us, affliction must be all for good. And, therefore, the sentence closes appealing to the very tenderest comparison;—"As a father, does the son a favor." Many translate, "*And delights in him, as a father in a son.*" Our English Version has it:—"As a father the son in whom he delighteth." But neither of these agrees with the grammar, and the former of the two adds nothing to the sense. The verb "delights," which also means *is favorable to* or *gracious*, is in apposition to the verb "*corrects*" of the first clause. The meaning is, therefore, as we gave it. The Almighty corrects the man he loves; and thereby, as a father in the case of a son, *does him a favor, or shows himself gracious to him.*

13 Oh, the blessedness of the man! he has |¹³ Happy is the man
 found wisdom; | that findeth wisdom,
yea of the man! he gets discernment. | and the man that get-
 teth understanding:

This is the favor correction has done for him, (emphatic perfect). As elsewhere translated, the passage would be less interesting. "*Happy is the man that findeth wisdom*" (E. V.) would simply announce the trite reality that wisdom is a blessing, leaving it only to be noticed that he has said so in connection with chastisement; and leaving it to be inferred that chastisement begets wisdom. But the italic "*that*" shows that we have a right to translate in separate clauses. *Blessed is the man*, (that is, that God corrects), not now because correction *tends* to wisdom, or because it is *meant* for wisdom, or because it often results in it; but let us take the whole beautiful Proverb: it actually produces it. If God loves a son, he corrects him, and then, "*O the blessedness of the man!*" It actually makes him wise. Let us not forget the doctrine that affliction, as indeed everything else,* always benefits the Christian. "**Of the man**"—"**yea, of the man.**" There is a plain emphasis on the thought that it is *the man* that is blessed, because all out-

* (Jas. 1:2) "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers trials."

ward blessings are often swept away. Wisdom makes its profits within.* And herein starts our line of proof, that the translation above is the correct one. It may be objected to it that "Blessed is the man" has often the arrangement without the pronoun; as for example (Ps. 84 : 5), "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee: in whose heart are the ways of them." (See Hebrew). Now without appealing to the thought that it is hard to claim a grammatical exception in any passage because of the stress of the sense, and then quote it against another passage where the grammatical arrangement is the most logical, it is of importance to consider whether the strict grammar does not answer the best, even in the quoted passages. For example, let us look at this one. The Psalmist has been speaking of the temple, that is God's inner kingdom. He says,— "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house" (84 : 4). Here the verb is in the participle, and, therefore, a pronoun would not be needed. What more natural than that he should go on to explain the blessedness?—"Blessed is the man! His strength is in thee. He has highways in his heart." Moreover, the emphatic "*man*" seems also important here. He has been speaking in the plural. He returns to the plural even in this very sentence. But he is detailing that which inures to our inmost nature. He is not promising prosperity. The highways of David might be in the caves and partridge wanderings of the wilderness. But he says the "*man*" will be blessed. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy courts"—not that they will as a necessary thing be prosperous—often far otherwise—but the "*man*" will be blessed. Whatever his forest wanderings, "He will have highways in his heart."[†] "**He gets discernment,**" literally *he brings out* or *draws out* like grain from a sheaf. Many think it means spread-

* (Rom. 14 : 17), "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

† Ps. 84 : 5. This whole Psalm is interesting, and calls for a new translation. The fifth verse has been rendered (E. V.), "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee: in whose heart are the ways of them, etc." Throw out the Italics, and be stricter with the words, and there emerges this: "Blessed is the man (collective) whose strength is in Thee. There are highways in their hearts." Let their life be as pathless as it will, their pilgrimage is over smooth roads inwardly. The seventh verse has been translated (E. V.), "They go from strength to strength; *every one of them* in Zion appeareth before God." Again dispense with the Italics, and we have this doctrine:—that saints grow. If they do not see it themselves, God sees it; "They go from strength to strength it appears unto God in Zion."

*ing wisdom** as the first clause means *getting it*; but the best sense is, *bringing it out*, either for ourselves or others. Many of the other passages, where the word occurs, embrace both meanings.

- 14 For her gains are better than the gains of
silver,
and her increase than choice gold.
15 In her very self she is more precious than
pearls;
and all the things thou couldest desire are
not to be compared with her.

14 For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof of than fine gold.

15 She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

“**Her gains.**” The root means *to move about* like a merchant; who in those days travelled. The English version gives it, “*merchandise*,” and we justly keep in view the *sort* of gains, viz., those of a merchant. But the word in our text was framed to mean the *results†* of travelling around, and means so in other passages. V. 15. “**In her very self she is more precious than pearls.**” Solomon is always keeping this in view, that the prize is in “*herself.*” The pronoun, therefore, should be made emphatic, as in the Hebrew. “**All the things thou couldest desire.**” What a grand comparison! The translation is correct, though of necessity a paraphrase of the original. *All thy delights. All thy desired things* would be a more literal expression. “**Are not to be compared with her.**” We have tried to get a terser term that would translate this verb always. It means *to be set*, just as another word that denotes comparison means *to set in order*. Literally, “*Cannot be set with her*,” i. e., so as to fit. A bold reading would be, *is nothing to her*. So Haman (Esther 5:13); “*Yet, all this is nothing to me so long as I see Mordecai, the Jew, sitting at the king's gate.*” So Esther in that most adroit courtiership (Esther 7:4). It is translated in our English, “*Although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage.*” But the word is not “*although*,” but “*for.*” Let us go back; abiding close by

* As a merchant. See next verse.

† We translate “*gains*” instead of “*gain*,” because the plural implies better the whole results, as in the original, and because the “*gain of money*” would sound more like a *moneyed gain* than the gain that *money makes* as the results of merchandise. The word is in the singular, however.

the Hebrew. "For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain and to perish. And if we had been sold for bond men and bond women I had held my peace; for there is nothing in the case of an enemy" (such as she modestly confessed the Jews might be considered to be) "that can be compared with a loss to the king."—The Septuagint adds two whole verses at this point. Some think that they had intruded into the Hebrew. One clause that it adds is,—"*Nothing evil can compete with her.*" This is indeed a grand philosophy. Everything except her is evil. Long life and great riches and great honors are evils unless with wisdom. Everything that we could desire becomes an evil to sink us all the deeper in eternal ruin. In this light the comparison with wisdom is appalling. We are prepared, therefore, for the doctrine of the next verse, which is,—that Wisdom sanctifies these earthlinesses. That is, she alone can make a splendid use of them:—

16 Length of days is in her right hand,
in her left, riches and honor.

|
in her right hand; and
in her left hand riches
and honour.

We have already quoted this (v. 2), as militating against a former exposition. Every one seems to believe that "**in her right hand**" means in her possession, or as the thing she wins. And so the text has been taken for granted (allied with many others) as meaning that Piety promises long life and great successes. There is rarely a phrase that can correct, with such an emphatic evidence, such an established interpretation. The "**right hand**" in the Bible everywhere means one's highest instrumentality or agency. Christ himself is thrice called the "Right Hand" of the Father. (Ps. 80:17.) "Let thy hand be upon the Man,—thy Right Hand; upon the Son of Man whom thou madest strong for thyself." (Ps. 60:5; 108:6.) "That thy beloved ones may be delivered, save thy Right Hand, and answer me." It is true these are new interpretations, and we cannot stop to give our reasons: but the use itself of "**right hand**" as the figure of *high agency* is every where in the sacred Book. But further; "**in the right hand**" has but one meaning. We have tried all the cases. It means that the thing said to be "**in the right hand,**" is wielded in a high agency. Christ is

said to hold "the stars in his right hand," (Rev. 2 : 1.) meaning that he made ministers his great instrument. The usage, therefore, was borrowed by the Greek. Moreover, "Is there not a lie in my right hand" (Is. 44 : 20)? that is, in my great work or agency, the making of idols? is there not, in the very business itself, a lie? "In his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem" (Eze. 21 : 22). That is, he was governed by it in his most important agencies. Zöckler, in his late work on Proverbs, gives two passages as fully carrying out the old understanding. A new and beautiful proof is derived from the difficulties of the old understanding in these passages themselves. We will examine both of them. The first is Ps. 16 : 11, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures forevermore." Notice the italics; and then let us read without them; and almost without further change we reach at once a far more beautiful interpretation, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence, fulness of joy; by thy right hand (that is, by thy grand working 'thou wilt show me,' again understood) pleasures forevermore." The other passage is Is. 44 : 20; "Is there not a lie in my right hand?" What is the prophet speaking of? The making of idols. "He feedeth on ashes" he says; that is, the man does who makes them: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, or say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?" that is; not a lie in my possession simply, but a lie in my work, i. e., in my great agency, a lie in the very business he feels called to prosecute? We are prepared, therefore, to understand our text as meaning that Wisdom is able to use a long life as a splendid agency. Long life, when it is bestowed, is in the very hand of Wisdom. "**And in her left riches and honor.**" Zöckler quotes again:—First (Prov. 8 : 18), "Riches and honor are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness." How can we escape the idea, that, after all, riches are promised? Again, and apparently stronger,—Prov. 22 : 4, "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, honor and life." And yet they both easily resolve themselves. "Riches and honor are with me." Yes! But what sort of riches? The Proverb immediately replies:—

"Durable riches and righteousness :" and then adds, still further to direct the sense, "My fruit is better than gold ;" showing that the riches and honor are that sort which are still better pointed out in the other of Zöckler's quotations. There the character of the riches is distinctly affirmed by being associated with life. "The end of a humiliation which is the fear of Jehovah, is wealth and honor and life." When Wisdom says, that she has long life in her right hand, and riches and honor in her left, she means, therefore, that both are used upon herself: that she uses long life just as is said above (3 : 2) to make increase for her, and all worldly wealth as a lower but most substantial instrumentality.

- 17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
and all her paths prosperity.

¹⁷ Her ways are
ways of pleasantness,
and all her paths are
peace.

"**Her ways**" are the ways she makes people travel in. "**Her ways**" are sometimes on hot coals and to burning stakes. If there is anything unpleasant in her way, it is to promote wisdom, and so to promote more "**pleasantness**" another time. And wisdom, or spiritual light, is the very highest pleasure, through all eternity, that even God, who is infinitely happy, can possibly enjoy. "**All her paths prosperity**;"—more thoroughly "*all*" of them than in the case of pleasantness. While the happiness of a Christian may flag in this world, his "*prosperity*" never stops a moment. His *way* is prosperous, i. e., he gains by every inch. "The path of the just is as the shining light." The merchandise, being not of gold, the MAN, though he may go back in every ostensible interest, yet touches the margin of the tomb having gained by every footstep.

- 18 In her very self she is a tree of life to them
that lay hold upon her;
and each is led straight of them that have
her by the hand.

¹⁸ She is a tree of
life to them that lay
hold upon her; and
happy is every one that
retaineth her.

A few passages in this book that we shall overtake in turn, and the texts (Gen. 2 : 9; 3 : 22) are all in the O. T. that mention the "**tree of life**." These last, however, are most exciting. They tell of a tree of which, if we so much as bit the fruit

i. e., if we so much as eat the least from it, we should live forever. Immortal joys which involve the body, and bags of wealth (Lu. 12:33), and never ending ages of delight were suspended conditionally for some mystic cause upon that brief act. The type, therefore, is singularly good of the results of wisdom. If I but get a ray, if I but steal a glance of spiritual wisdom; for that is what is meant by **laying hold upon her**; I "shall never perish." Touching her but once, as the sick did our Saviour, if it be a permanent *fastening-hold upon her*, will make her my guide, and I shall be "**led**" forever after "**straight**" in the long path to blessedness.

- 19** Jehovah by wisdom founded the earth,
setting firm the heavens by discernment.
20 By His knowledge the deeps are cloven
up,
and the clouds drop down the dew.

19 The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth: by understanding hath he established the heavens.

20 By His knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.

The wisdom, so splendid in man, has its seed also in the Almighty. We are made in his image. The wisdom, so spiritual as to belong only to the pious, nevertheless has its reachings into all wisdom, as we saw Chap. 1:10, where it is called *wisdoms*, as embracing all forms of it. Creative wisdom, therefore, is part of the broad array. But, now, as a more important teaching, creative wisdom must include the spiritual. God could not found the heavens without that holy character that makes the system possible. Its enormous intricacies could not be kept up without the harmonizing influences of holiness. Government, of course, is built upon it. Justice, of course, is a part of it; and the whole would be an unmeaning mass unless Jehovah, by wisdom, shaped it, viz., in those diviner forms in which he is the governor as well as the builder and original schemer of the universe. God **WOULD** not have built the world without holiness; and, therefore, in the very strictest sense, "**by wisdom he founded**" the heavens, because only that holy light, which is the light of love, could be the inspiring motive for building the habitations of his creatures. We are to understand this verse as meaning, therefore, first, that creative light merges into all light, as one grand omniscience; but,

second, that creative light would be nothing without spiritual light; that God's love and justice were the very spring and harmonious law whereon all are builded. V. 20. **The deeps are cloven up,**" i. e., from one ocean bed through to a new one. Great geologic changes. "**Clouds drop down the dew.**" Strange that so slight an operation should thus be singled out! and impossible to keep back the fancy (which, however, must be a mere fancy) that along with the old deeps being broken forth, Solomon knew something of the great nebular condensings of our planets.

- 21** My son, suffer not to pass from thine eyes, | **21** My son, let not
watch, what is stable and well-considered, | them depart from thine
22 and they shall be life to thy soul | eyes: keep sound wis-
dom and discretion:
and grace to thy neck. | **22** So shall they be
life unto thy soul, and
grace to thy neck.

The address, "**my son**," or (*4:1*) "**ye sons**," would seem to be the intimation of the beginning of new passages. There is a tendency in the sacred Scriptures to be divided into isolated and very brief lessons; and it is convenient, as well as beautiful, to divide them so with good apparent margins. But this instance might seem to be exceptional. Our English translation begins, "*Let not them depart from thine eyes;*" and the text has gotten to be buried, therefore, in the midst of a stream of sentences. But the Hebrew, in a law it has, relieves the difficulty. When a verb (Green Gr. § 275, 1) precedes the governing noun, it is often launched out in the primary, or masculine form, without staying to ask whether the noun is masculine or feminine. We may suppose, therefore, that the feminine nouns at the close of the sentence, govern this masculine. Moreover, the nouns at the close of the sentence, are not governing nouns at all, but objects. We are to imagine these nouns, therefore, as repeated. "**My son, suffer not what is stable to pass, etc.; watch what is stable, etc.**" We are to observe in all these directions that Solomon commands voluntary things, and promises involuntary things (*2:2*). "**Incline thine ear,**" and "**thou shalt apply thine heart.**" (*2:3-5*). "**Seek,**" as for money, and "**thou shalt understand the fear, etc.**" (*3:1-4*). "**Forget not my law,**" and "**thou shalt find good**

intelligence." So here :—Let not certain things "*pass from thine eyes*," and "*they shall be life to thy soul and grace to thy neck*." Let them "*not pass, etc.*," i. e., simply attend to them. "Watch" like a sentinel, intently eying. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word." We speak of voluntary and involuntary. It is voluntary simply to watch a thing. It is involuntary to cleanse such a thing as our inmost nature. Solomon enjoins the voluntary, and promises the involuntary. The voluntary we can do, save only for that grand helplessness, an aversion of the will itself. The involuntary we cannot do, save only mediately through the obedient acts. Attention is, of all but muscular things, the sole act of volition.* Attention, therefore, is within our power, if God give grace to the will. A new nature is not within our power, whether God give grace or not; only mediately. This is the drift of the promise. You do your part, and God will do His. "Attend, and thou shalt understand." Let not certain things "*depart from thine eyes, and they shall be life to thy soul and grace to thy neck*." V. 21. "**What is stable;**"—the peculiar word, chap. 2:7. The impenitent can be trusted to understand it; for he knows "that the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them," if he does not have an eye to what is stable, have no stability, and will only add to his perdition. "**Well considered.**" This is a noun. The verb means to *meditate*. The root means *murmuring, muttering*, with the low voice of persons talking to themselves. What is "*well considered*," therefore, is a well-formed purpose. The Quaker doctrine of an inward light is true thus far, that if a man would digest his purposes; that is, if he would sit and meditate, and keep in view all that he thinks as a Christianly educated man, and follow all that he keeps in view, and do it long enough, he would, by this promise, come out into the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God; (but see, by way of caution, 2:1-6). "**Life to thy soul;**" just the opposite of death. Whatever spiritual death has been to the soul of man,

* See Author's *Metaphysics*, p. 69.

of that "*life*" will be the opposite and more. Life, starting from mere animal life, grows to mean, in the Bible, all conceivable good. "**Grace to thy neck.**" So sunken are we, that we can hardly realize that holiness is most precious just sheerly for itself. It not only brings good; not only does good; not only is good; but good in such a measure, that, abandoning so low a word as preciousness, it is good on its own account alone, and without anything in the world beside. It is not only "*life to the soul*," but "*grace, etc.*;" that is, a splendid ornament.

Having lifted us to this vantage ground, the Wise Man can easily bear down upon all uneasinesses as to mere worldly welfare. If thou hast life in the soul :—

23 Then shalt thou walk thy road safely
and thy foot shall not stumble.

23 Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble.

24 If thou shalt lie down, thou shalt not be
afraid;
yea, thou dost lie down and thy sleep is
sweet.

24 When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid; yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.

The Bible is full of such reaffirmances, v. 24. (Matt. 7:7, 8):— "Ask, and it shall be given you; for every one that asketh receiveth." "**If thou lie down, thou shalt not be afraid; yea, thou dost lie down, and thy sleep is sweet.**" The man whom God loves (v. 12) must have a practicable road to travel. His foot cannot finally stumble. His path, in its forlornest parts, must be leading by the sharpest cuts to the Celestial Canaan.

But sudden burstings in, and storms, when they are already breaking round the Christian! the Proverb provides for them :—

25 Be not afraid of sudden fear,
nor of the destruction of the wicked, be-
cause it is actually coming in.

25 Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh.

26 For Jehovah shall be as loins to thee,
and guard thy foot from being taken.

26 For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.

"**The destruction of the wicked.**" There has been a debate about this. Is it destruction by the wicked, or destruction for them? The debate, perhaps, is, in its very nature, groundless. Is it not all destruction? The Christian is threatened by the

sinners in all their ills, whether for them or by them. Sin breeds the whole of them; and the Wise Man would magnify the grace by saying, that they are equally indifferent. "Let cares, like a wild deluge, come."—V. 26. "**For Jehovah shall be as loins to thee.**" The word, often translated "*confidence*" (E. V.), primarily means the "*loins*." The "*loins*" were considered, in the East, the emblem of fortitude. "God trieth the reins," (or loins), (1 Jer. 17:10), i. e., our fortitude. A confident man was one who had stout loins. Whenever what is primary will come in, it is best to introduce it; and the word stood nakedly "*the loins*" to a Hebrew eye. The preposition *in* in the Hebrew, often means '*as*' (Ps. 39:6). "Surely every man walketh as a vain show" (or, as an image), literally, "*in* an image." So (Ex. 6:3) "I appeared unto Abraham in (as) God Almighty." (Ex. 18:4), "The God of my father was in (as) my help," (see Class XXVI). The assurance, therefore, that "**Jehovah shall be as loins**" to us, is as strong as an assurance can be made. We could bear mountains, if Jehovah be our loins. The idea is, that the destruction of the wicked is meant only for the reprobate, and, that if wisdom is life, it is useless to be afraid of anything. The snares are set for others, and Jehovah, who is "*loins to us*," shall guard *our* "**feet from being taken.**"

With these luxuries of grace, the Wise Man mixes in its conditions. They are rugged like those of the Apostle (1 Cor. 13). If we enjoy the good of the gospel, we are to render again according to the benefits shown us:—

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>27 Withhold not good from the rightful subject of it,
when it is in the power of thy hand to do.</p> <p>28 Say not to thy neighbor, Go and come again
and to morrow I will give; and thou hast means at the time.</p> | <p>27 Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.</p> <p>28 Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.</p> |
|--|--|

"**Rightful subject of it;**" literally, "*its master.*" A rendering, attractive for its brevity, would, therefore, have been, "**Withhold not good from its master.**" But we have encoun-

tered this idiom already (1:19). *Masters of spoil* means "those that get possession of it." *Masters of wickedness* (Eccles. 8:8) means the wicked. *Masters of wisdom* (Proverbs 16:22) means the wise. And, therefore, in the present text, *Masters of good* means those that can rightfully claim it. This includes all rightful claims; not always ownership, (for that would make the verse only mean that we are not to defraud), but those infinitely harder claims under the law, "*Thou shalt love thy neighbor.*" "**Withhold not.**" These precepts are very scientific. They touch the very marrow. We are often all right in purpose, but our alms-deeds stick to us. There is a sort of torpor in getting them out of our fingers. The command, therefore, is, *Restrain not, or hold not back;* such is the meaning of the Hebrew. Push off the alms-gift, and let it boldly go, where it sticks in our intent. And then this bold rule,—not so much when it is *in the power of thine estate*, or in the swing of thy whole future calculations, so as to be certain never to want it: (then we would never give); but—"in the power of thy hand." We see a trace of this in another sentence (Eccles. 9:10); "*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do:*" the meaning plainly being, that "*he that observeth the wind shall not sow*" (Eccles. 11:4); that we are to trust largely to the Almighty for our after wants; that we are to look more at what we have in our hands than at our whole future estate; and not say to a man in torpid calculations, v. 28, "*Go and come again, and to-morrow I will give; and thou hast means at the time.*" Some translate this, "*and he is with thee;*" that is, a guest at thy house. But this narrows the sense. The Proverb is far from noting a mere rule of Eastern hospitality. Some say, too, that "*when it is in the power of thy hand to do*" (v. 27), means rather, "*when thou hast thy hand from God* (i. e., thy power) *to do.*" That would be, indeed, a striking sense. That is,—Give while God puts it in thy power. But there are numbers of these instances (Gen. 31:29). "*It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt.*" It is less probable that Laban was attempting to say, "*My power is from God to do you hurt;*" particularly as the Hebrew, to say the very least, equally suits both of the intended meanings. (Deut. 28:32.) "*There shall be no might in thy hand;*" alias,

"There shall be no hand for thee of God." The old is the better rendering. The passage, therefore, is the grand lesson of charity,—that the poor have rights, and that the wise must be sure to concede them.

- 29 Be not silent with thy neighbor as to an evil,
and he dwelling trustfully with thee. |
sq. Devise not evil
against thy neighbour,
seeing he dwelleth se-
curely by thee.

The verb means to "*plot*," as well as to be "*silent*." The connection of the two is obvious. To "*plot*" implies a much less profound admonition. Moreover, it ought to be a law in criticism (see Prov. 6:1-5), to claim the more comprehensive sense. It is a rule, hard to keep, that we are to give our neighbor, in such cases, the chance of all our own intelligence. If we know evil threatening, we should tell him. If we know advantages that he fails to see, we should not take them. The picture is singularly complete. Our neighbor "**dwelling trustfully**" (literally, *with trust*), with us, is to have the benefit of the direction (Phil. 2:4),—"Look not every man on his own things, but every man, also, on the things of others."

- 30 Thou shalt not quarrel with a man to no purpose;
verily, he has already done thee mischief. |
30 Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm.

We might be sure the English version was not correct. It is tautological. That fault is death to Proverbs. *If not* (2d clause) is a Hebrew form for asseveration (אָנֹכִ אֶמְתַּח). We translate it, "**verily**." Strife (and it means strife of all forms) is bad enough, even when we are right. But though unlawful suits have sometimes coined wealth, yet, temporally, they often work disgrace, and eternally, most certain ruin. "**To no purpose;**" i. e., not simply without occasion, but where there is no good to arise, even when the *cause* is just. We are not to quarrel except for a good purpose. "**Verily;**" or, "**rest assured**" (אָנֹכִ אֶמְתַּח), "**he has already done thee mischief**" (emphatic preterite). Spiritually, if not temporally, the bolt is already shot.

- 31** Do not become excited about a rapacious man,
and do not choose any of his ways;
32 for he who is bent out of his course is an abomination to Jehovah
but with the straightforward is His secret counsel.

31 Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.

32 For the froward is abomination to the Lord; but his secret is with the righteous.

“**Become excited.**” It includes all excitements, envy and emulation among the rest. Thou shalt not only not be excited about a man who has won by fraud; but thou shalt not choose,—thou shalt not be willing pleasantly to admire, any part of his good estate. Thou shalt not think well of his gold as a thing to be distinguished from his history. For the “rust of it doth eat as doth a canker” (Jas. 5:3); and God never forgets its origin. “**For he who is bent out of his course.**” These idioms (see Class XXXII.), should all be noticed. “*His course*,” i. e., the bad man’s course. He does not stick even to that. His course is better than he ever follows. And dropping off, even from a bad man’s better thought, he is a special abomination. “**The straightforward;**” a word often translated *righteous*. But here, in antithetical relation with a man “*bent out of his course*,” it is well to restore it, and to read it as it looked in Hebrew.

- 33** The curse of Jehovah is in the house of the wicked;
but the resting place of the righteous is

33 The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just.

As already said (2:18), “**house**,” in such passages, means all conceivable interests. So (Ruth 4:11), “Leah and Rachel did build the house of Israel.” We are to notice how, in many such comparisons, the truth is made intensive by throwing toward the wicked all the advantages. The “*house*,” or *heavy interests*, are imagined for the wicked; “*the resting place*,” or *traveler’s hut*, i. e., the scanty lot, are imagined for the righteous. In spite of this, the righteous overweighs. How often are like asseverations thus intensified! “The house of the wicked shall be overthrown; but the tent of the upright shall flourish” (Prov. 14:11). “In the house of the righteous is

much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble " (Prov. 15 : 6).

- 34 If scoffers are in question, He Himself
 will scoff,
 but if the humble, He will bestow favor.

³⁴ Surely he scorn-
eth the scorner; but
he giveth grace unto
the lowly.

" To the froward He will show Himself froward " (Ps. 18 : 26). Some translate,—"*If He scoff at the scoffers, He will also give grace to the humble.*" But our sense sits closer by the text. The preposition is well rendered, "**in question**;" and the pronoun "**He Himself**," is meant to be expressed, and stands fixed for emphatic interpretation.

- 35 Glory, wise men inherit;
 but fools are each piling shame.

³⁵ The wise shall in-
herit glory; but shame
shall be the promotion
of fools.

The last clause is awkwardly ambiguous. *Exalting*, or *lifting up*, is singular, and, therefore, might seem to agree with shame. So reads the English Version. But, "*Shame is the exaltation of fools*," or, "*Shame sweeps away fools*," as some translate it, is not so consonant with the earlier clause as the rendering we have given. The singular is sometimes used (see 3 : 18) to give intensity to the plural. We translate it "*each*." "*Glory wise men inherit*," is well balanced by the picture, that "*fools are*" *but* "*piling shame*."

CHAPTER IV.

- 1 Hear, ye children, the admonition of a father,
 and attend so as to learn discernment;
2 for a good lesson is that I give you;
 my direction forsake ye not.
3 For I became a son to my father,
 gentle and alone in the regard of my mother.
4 And he directed me and said to me;—
 Let thy heart take hold of my words;
 keep watch over my commandments and live.

HEAR, ye children,
the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.

² For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.

³ For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother.

⁴ He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live.

Solomon began by naked announcements:—(1 : 2-5), "To

know wisdom, is righteousness." "The wise man will hear, etc." He follows with more concrete things, calling in the idea of "**a father**" (1 : 8), remembering that quality of men that makes things influence them in proportion to their descent to the realities of their actual life. He now goes down to another principle. After first giving truth in itself, and then giving truth enforced by patriarchal veneration, he now traces that truth to where it came from, viz., from *his* father; his idea being, It is no mere theorizing scheme, but one that I give, because, in my case, it was also originally given; (v. 3), "**I became a son to my father; gentle and alone in the regard of my mother,**" because I listened to these same instructions. I hand them on to you, enforced by the convictions of an absolute experience. V. 1. "**Ye children.**" We notice that the address glides into the plural. It is an easy change, by which the inspired rhetorician gives up the singular to be employed in his father's teaching (vs. 4, 10, etc.). The question has been asked, how far this teaching goes. Some say to the tenth verse. Some say, to the twentieth. Some say, through the twenty-seventh. Some say, through the sixth of the fifth chapter. The very helplessness of the question, as to the vigor of any articulate proof, may show, that it never was meant to be settled. The teachings were the same. The style, no doubt, was wholly Solomon's. If we fixed upon any end, it would be in the next chapter, (v. 6), where Solomon goes off on the plural:—"and now, ye children, hearken unto me :" and where, in an easy way, he echoes the close of the anterior admonitions. In the first part (chap. 4) the words all gain by being kept to their primary signification. "**Hear, ye children, the admonition of a father;**" i. e., his *correction*, that form of "*instruction*" (E. V.) that is mixed with chastisement. "**And attend so as to learn discernment.**" "*At tend, to know understanding*" (E. V.) is not good English. Moreover, "*discernment*" takes hold of a thought in the original which means to *distinguish* or look at *separately*. It means *spiritual discernment*, that which the "*natural man*" (1 Cor. 2 : 14) is said not to have. We shall always translate this word this way in every part of the Bible. And so, in the next verse,

"*law.*" (E. V.) It seems very important. It occurs all over the Pentateuch. It seems to answer to "*the law*" discussed by the apostle (Rom. 8:3.). And yet it would be vastly better to bring it to its root. It means "*direction.*" The root from which it is derived means to *pour*, or to *throw*. When we pour water, we give it a *direction*. When we throw a javelin, we *direct* it. Rather, when we throw up our hand, we would point the way. In all instances we get much smoother English by going back to the original root. We propose to translate the word "*law*" (E. V.), therefore, "*direction*" in all the texts (not three hundred) in which it occurs from this root. If any one asks, if that will not take the word out of the Old Testament (E. V.), I say,—Yes. If any one asks, whether it will take the thought out, I say,—No. For the "*statutes*" and "*commandments*" that are spoken of (E. V.) are the words that express the thought, and ought, all along, to have had the word. If any asks, whether "*breaking the law*" and the "*penalty of the law*" and the "*curse of the law*" will not give trouble when we come across such expressions in the English Version, I say this is one of the great charms of the change. Such expressions never occur. This is one of the arguments for the interpretation; that the thought lies smooth with this root, and, in a large number of cases, is smothered up, and does not answer to the English in which we dress it. For example, in this verse: "*forsake ye not what I direct,*" is much less stately in a father than "*forsake ye not my law.*" In Ps. 119:72, "What thy mouth directs," is much better than "the law of thy mouth." "In her tongue is kind direction" (Prov. 31:26) is better than "in her tongue is the law of kindness" (E. V.). There remain enough cases of other words where, in translating "*law*," we retain the idea of *breaking*, or *violation*. Moreover, light springs from this source;—the *verb* is just in the neighborhood, (v. 4)—"**H**e directed me." It makes all much plainer to have it like the noun. "**A** good lesson;" literally "**a** good take." The verb occurs just afterward (v. 10) "*Hear, O my son, and take my words.*" The nearest equivalent that can be found to offer, is "*lesson.*" "**F**or I became.' The verb *to be* not being necessary in Hebrew, which can ex-

press existence without it, means *becoming*, or *coming to be*, when it is found actually expressed. "Let there be light" means rather "let light *come to be*." Solomon "*became*" a son to his father under this teaching. "**Gentle**;" not "*tender*" (E. V.), referring, as commentators imagine, to his early age; but something that he grew to be "*in the regard of (his) mother*;" that is, "*gentle*," or "*docile, and alone*;" not Bathsheba's only child, for she had several; but an only one *in the regard* of Bathsheba. The expression is, *in her face*, or *before her presence*. Just as (Luke 1 : 6) "*before God*" means *in his sight*, or *as it appears to Him*. V. 4. "**And he**," i. e., the father; letting the father take the precedence, as evermore in the East (Matt. 1 : 16). "*And he directed me*,"—the same verb whose noun is translated "*law*" (E. V. *passim* see v. 2). "**Let thy heart take hold of my words; keep watch over my commandments and live.**" This is not a repetition of what is passed, but an advance upon it. I said (2 : 1-5) that Solomon commanded what was voluntary, and left the involuntary to be promised. Here he commands the involuntary, because he has shown the steps to it. We cannot make our "*heart*" do anything, except by the anterior steps. We cannot, of all other things in the world, "*live*" by a voluntary act; but we can *keep watch over the commandments*. I mean, we can, as it is a voluntary act, if God make us willing. But we cannot "*live*," and we cannot act upon our "*hearts*," as a voluntary thing, except through some form of anterior obedience. It is not necessary, however, as Zöckler does, to translate "*and thou shalt live*;" for it is a clear imperative; and though the imperative is sometimes predictive in its character (Matt. 23 : 32), still that is not to be brought into the meaning here. The wise teacher may well command us to "*live*," because he has directed the steps that shall certainly lead to it.

5 Get wisdom; get discernment;
forget not; and turn not thou away from
the speeches of my mouth.

6 Forsake her not, and she shall guard thee.
Love her, and she shall stand sentry over
thee.

5 Get wisdom, get
understanding; forget
it not: neither decline
from the words of my
mouth.

6 Forsake her not,
and she shall preserve
thee: love her, and she
shall keep thee.

"**Get Wisdom; get discernment.**" We cannot do it directly;

but there immediately follow the rules to be observed;—“*forget not, and turn not thou away from the speeches of my mouth.*” It is astonishing how much is made of attention. It is the only voluntary thing, not muscular. We have already alluded to an ethical truth heretofore not noticed (see note, p. 48). All things in these Proverbs make *attention* the great voluntary thing. “*Wisdom,*” of course, means spiritual wisdom; and “*discernment,*” which has still that element of *distinguishing* which we marked before (v. 1), means that *spiritual distinguishing* that proceeds from a light that is from above. “*Forget*” is a word in the Hebrew that admits the preposition “*from*.” It must, therefore, stand with “*turn*,” (though we cannot so translate it in the English) as a *forgetting from* (like a *turning from*) “*the words of my mouth.*” *Turning* is an insidious thing. We “*turn*” from very solemn “*words,*” when they have greatly impressed us, by worldly things that steal our sight. It is “*the turning away* of the simple (that) shall slay them” (1:32.). V. 6. “*Her;*” that is, the prominent figure of the previous sentence, “*Wisdom.*” “*Forsake her not and she shall guard thee.*” “*Preserve thee,*” says the English version; but that is too general. It is the preserving by a watchman. “*Love her, and she shall stand sentry over thee.*” And this is strangely fulfilled. We turn an eye to Wisdom, and she turns an eye to us. We watch, and she watches. In our ungodly state we cannot think of Wisdom that she does not turn and step back towards us by common grace. And, if we think so long and strive so earnestly, as that she comes up to us and is full in sight, then each new fondness fascinates her and brings her close. Each wise thing we do makes us wiser. We put our hand in hers, and she takes charge of us for life. Give her one spiritual thought: I mean by that, win from her one ray of saving knowledge; and she mounts guard over us at once. And the nearer that we draw, the closer does she watch over our eternal being.

So the next truth is evident:—

7 As the height of wisdom get wisdom; | 7 Wisdom is the
and by means of all thy getting get dis- principal thing; there-
cernment. fore get wisdom: an! with all thy getting get
understanding.

"As the height of wisdom get wisdom." This is four words; and its terseness has encouraged different translations. The English has it:—"Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom :" "is" and "therefore" being in Italics. Zöckler has it:—"The highest thing is wisdom. Get wisdom." No one seems to have noticed the grand meaning from clamping the four words together. They stand in the Hebrew thus. "*Beginning*" (or *principal thing*)—"wisdom"—"get"—"wisdom." Let me say, as bearing on the case, that the two first are dependent on each other;—as, for example, in 9:10, "the beginning of wisdom ;" like 1:7, "the beginning of knowledge." We have but, therefore, to put the two clauses in apposition by the perfectly grammatical prefix of the word "*as*," to have a most excellent interpretation. "*As the very height of wisdom get wisdom :*" the idea being that, if Wisdom stands sentry over the man that once sues to her; through the long ages watches his life, and lifts him higher, if he has here raised his heart to her as her friend; then his wisest act in eternal ages will have been that act of his conversion; and the very noblest gain, not in amount, but in determining significance, that gain which he made, when he laid hold by humble faith of that tree of life which grows now in all the wilderness. It is a good meaning, therefore:—"As the highest thing in wisdom get wisdom ; and by means of all thy getting get discernment." The English has it, "*With all thy getting get understanding ;*" i. e., along with or in addition to all the rest of thy gettings. But the beautiful idea is as in Pro. 3:16. We are to turn all our gettings into the channel of more grace. We are to use all our properties for growing wiser. We are to grind up all our corn into the bread of spiritual nourishment. For our meat is to do the will of him that hath sent us. And therein we are to be the very essence of Wisdom, who uses even life itself for her advancement; for as we explained the passage, "length of days are in her right hand, and in her left riches and honors."

8 Exalt her, and she shall promote thee.
She shall load thee with honor because thou dost embrace her.

8 Exalt her, and she shall promote thee;
she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her.

9 She shall give to thy head a garland of grace; as a crown of glory shall she serve for thee.

9 She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.

“**Exalt her and she shall promote thee.**” We exalt her most in her great embodiment—the Only Wise; and Eli (1 Sam. 2 : 30) heard the truth in respect to Him,—“Them that honor me I will honor; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” “**Because**” not “*when*” (E. V.). It is usually best to translate “**בֵ**” “because,” for it will nearly always fit in. Her honoring us is *because* we embrace her; and that peculiarly above all usual emphasis of the word, because it is wisdom itself that becomes the honor. We can be honored only when we are in her embrace. Such too is the very meaning in the next verse, v. 9. “**Serve for thee.**” In our English it is translated “*deliver to thee.*” The verb is a very rare one. It means to be able. In our text it means *to avail for or to serve as.* And the meaning is, that wisdom, i. e. spiritual holiness is itself “*a crown of*” everlasting “*glory.*” We had the idea before at the very opening of the book. Here it is repeated with a higher emphasis. “**She shall give to thy head a garland of grace; as a crown of glory shall she serve for thee.**” Wisdom in its highest preciousness, is wisdom in itself, nakedly and in its high adornment.

10 Hear, O my son, and take my words, and they shall grow greater to thee thro’ years of life.

to Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many.

“**And they shall grow greater to thee.**” This is one of the list of passages given under chap. 3 : 2. It is uniformly commented upon as though wisdom promised long life. But that we are too hasty in translating this verb of increase of numbers rather than increase in size and growth, is illustrated in the 29th chapter (v. 16) where our English version reads:—“When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth; but the righteous shall see their fall.” Now the verbs in the earlier clause are both the same. To translate them alike it would have read:—“When the wicked are multiplied, transgression is multiplied;” which would be such a truism that the translators seem to have

shrunk from it. They seem to have shrunk from it also in the second verse (chap. 29th), where they translate, "When the righteous are in authority." This last sentence balances better what is asserted in its second clause; and the sixteenth verse is altogether more significant, if we let that share in a kindred interpretation. "When the righteous grow great (29:2) the people rejoice; but when the wicked beareth rule the people mourn." Therefore, again, (v. 16,) "When the wicked grow great, transgression grows great; but the righteous shall see (clearer by) their fall." It is in favor of this method that the verb in our passage is masculine, while "years of life," as will be seen in the original, is feminine. We translate well, then, with "words" as the governing subject; because that also is masculine. But if this were out of the account, and "years" were the governing word (according to the rule Green Gr. § 275, 1, that a verb *preceding* its subject often does not agree in gender) we would still translate *grow great*. "Hear, O my son, and take my words and the years of thy life shall grow great." We prefer, however, the other rendering:—My words "*shall grow greater to thee through years of life*." This was so singularly true, if the "words," attended to, were to pile up wealth. "*Years of life*" must thus be used adverbially. They are so used as we shall see, chap. 9:11; signally so, Ps. 21:4; where *eternity*, which is also a noun, is similarly used, and that in immediate apposition. The meaning of the passage, therefore, is,—"**Hear, O my son, and take my words,**" (still voluntary work, it will be noticed;) and "*they*," that is the "words," will be "*growing greater to thee through years of life*."

11 I have directed thee in the way of wisdom ;
I have guided thee in level paths.

12 When thou walkest, thy step shall not be
straitened;
and if thou runnest, thou shalt not be made
to stumble.

11 I have taught thee
in the way of wisdom ;
I have led thee in right
paths.

12 When thou goest,
thy steps shall not be
straitened ; and when
thou runnest, thou
shalt not stumble.

"**I have directed thee.**" These perfect tenses all mean very actual influences,—influences quite positive at the time;—influences so positive, that if a man repents, they can be looked

upon as having taken place as past. So verse 2d, (literally) "*I have given you a good lesson.*" "*Directed thee;*" the word already alluded to (1 : 8): the original of what has been translated "*law*" (E. V.). "**Level paths;**" literally, "*paths of levelness.*" It might be translated "*righteousness;*" but agrees better in its primary sense when used in connection with being "*directed.*" V. 12, "**Shall not be straitened.**" This is a grand promise. When looking forward, a man's way may be hedged; but when setting out, it is marvellously cleared for him. "**When thou walkest,**" thy path shall open; "**thy step,**" that is, space enough for thy foot-fall, not being straitened. How universal such experience among believers! Not "*when thou runnest,*" (E. V.), but "*if thou runnest.*" These twigs of rhetoric are meant for notice. A man is obliged to *walk*, i. e., to move forward in his vital experience. But he is not obliged to *run*. In *running* there is the most exposure for godless people. But the Christian may wisely run; and, "*if*" he runs, he shall not "**be made to stumble;**" the form is the Niphal, implying that he will be kept from fatal downfall. The Christian may trudge slowly, or go faster on his course; yet may be utterly sure that he will neither be stopped or stumbled.

13 Take fast hold of discipline. Do not let go.
Keep watch over her; for she is herself

13 Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go; keep her; for she is thy life.

The verbs in the first clause are Hiphils. They are, for that reason, all the more intense. *Fasten, and do not let slack.* One rough grapple is not enough. Wisdom insidiously glides away if we give time to the Arch Deceiver. We are like a child trying to wake. He grasps the apple that one gives, but *slackens* as drowsiness creeps back. "**Keep watch over her.**" "*Discipline*" which in our old translation is "*instruction*" (see 1 : 2, 3) is masculine. The question, therefore, has been agitated, who is meant by "*her?*" Umbreit boldly says Solomon forgot,* and thought that he had said wisdom, which is feminine; but

* "Es ist daher wahr-scheinlich, dass der Verfasser sich vergass, und glaubte er habe תְּהִלָּה datir geschrieben."

the English, even more than Umbreit's language, teaches us that if a poem has been in the vein of personification, it will call up the figure again without much account of gender. If wisdom were itself masculine, it would not forbid the splendid form that rises upon us in the eighth chapter. Not "*she is thy life*" (E. V.); but "**She is herself thy life.**" The pronoun is emphatic.

- 14** Enter not by the path of the wicked; . . .
and do not attempt straight guidance by
the way of evil men.
15 Let that go; do not get on by that;
turn off of it; and pass on.
- ¹⁴ Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.
¹⁵ Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.

We must attend to the minutest edge of the language. We must all "**enter**" somewhere. We are all travelling. We all necessarily follow something. Don't take the "**path of the wicked**" for it. That is the doctrine. "**Do not attempt straight guidance.**" Observe; this is the word from which comes *happy* and *happiness*. The Kal means *to be straight*. The Pihel, which is in use here, means *to straighten, or to go straight*. All men are attempting to *go straight*. Respectable unbelievers are going straight in the opinion of all around them. They are straightforward men. This father advises his son not to go straight in that way. On the contrary he says, (v. 15) *Drop out of it.* The word in the original which we translate "*let go*" means to *unbridle*. The idea of *letting loose* is a very suitable one; for the way of ambitious worldlings is hard and tight. *Let go of it*, the wise man would say. *Push not forward on it* in the great enterprise of life. "*Turn off of it.*" And for the very purpose of getting clear, get a path of thine own. Take *my path*; and without pausing at the treacherous point, take it boldly, "**and pass on.**"

- 16** For the mere reason that they sleep not,
rest assured they do mischief,
and that their sleep is stolen, rest assured
they occasion stumbling.
- ¹⁶ For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.

We spoil Scripture by making mild passages introduce violent ones. The wise man is speaking of sober sinners: those

whose straight ways tempt the moral and polite. He is speaking of such temptations as push us toward honest ends by procrastinating courses; the temptation to enrich our families, for example, that we may get leisure for a more prosperous religion. He says, Let go that course; pass not on it even to an honest end. And then, that he may enforce his teaching, he declares that these honest men, the harder they work, the more they injure. The more grandly they push their lives, the more miserably they do harm to souls. Because, “**For** the mere reason that they sleep not, rest assured they do mischief; and that their sleep is stolen, rest assured they occasion stumbling.” Because, the inspired Solomon would say, the very ardor of the most moral work, if it be that of an impenitent, ripens the impenitent man the faster. It also makes him more injurious. It heightens the example. It gives more respectable stand to sin. It does not mean (E. V.) that they are mad for mischief, and that this better sort are sleepless to destroy. This is the jumbling already noticed. But simply “*because*” or “*for the reason that they sleep not, if not* (**שׁבָד**),” that is, “rest assured, etc,” the form of asseveration (see Job. 1:11); “and because their sleep is stolen (i. e., by hard work) *rest assured that* (**שׁבָד** again) *they occasion stumbling.*” Meaning, the more sleepless the industrious impenitent, the faster he is carrying everything to eternal ruin.

- 17 For they feed on food of wickedness, and drink wine of wrongs.
- 18 But the path of the righteous is as dawning light, advancing and brightening toward perfect day.
- 19 The way of the wicked is as darkness. They know not by what they are made to stumble.

17 For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.

18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

19 The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble.

“**For.**” That the most honest impenitent man, the harder he works, is but increasing his wickedness, finds a reason in this,— that “**wickedness**” is the “**food**” of the sinner. Just as bread forms the flesh, and makes it grow according as it is eaten, so wickedness is the food of the spirit. “My meat is,”

says Christ (John 4 : 34), “to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work.” “Thy words were found and I did eat them,” (Jer. 15 : 16). So in this same book (1 : 31) “Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way:” the meaning being, that a man’s way, spiritually considered, is all that forms him. He feeds upon it. If it is righteous, it nourishes him in life. If it is wicked, it nourishes him in death. “*He feeds on food of wickedness,*” and grows exactly in proportion as he sins; and he drinks the “**wine of wrongs,**” in that the most moral sinner, the more “*sleep is stolen,*” grows in his very enthusiasms. The more he works, the more he sins. The more he sins, the more he wrongs others. And the more he sins and wrongs others, the more he advances on the road to death. His very life, if he be only impenitent, is in its very self a deadly banqueting. V. 18, “**But the path of the righteous.**” That is a growth, too; though the inspired father turns away from the idea of nourishment; for our best righteousnesses are but poor “*food*” indeed. He likes to change the figure. He gives an image of advancing illumination. It is very complete; first, small in the beginning as the grey morning; second, always advancing, because neither saint nor sinner can ever stand still; but, third, brightening with the advance; and, fourth, brightening always; for “**the path of the righteous is as dawning light, advancing and brightening toward perfect day.**” The Christian, who endures, never stops his growth, and grows, as these Proverbs never fail to insist, by *attending to*, that is, by *watching over* the words of Wisdom. V. 19, “**The way of the wicked is as darkness. They know not by what they are made to stumble.**” Righteousness being only *light* (1 : 2, 3) unrighteousness is naturally “*darkness.*” Strange enough! it is a confessed darkness. There is a sort of common light that tells a man that impenitence is darkness. And yet it does not teach him better. Like mere physical light at times, some chemical ray is absent. The darkness that remains, is a darkness that may be felt. It constitutes our eternal chains (2 Peter, 2 : 4); it binds a man on the car of ruin. And like a Christian, who, in his partial light, may fail to know what is blessing him, so the sinner, in his absolute darkness, takes industry for virtue, and family love for a

wholesome righteousness; and does not know the incidents of life that are stumbling blocks to eternal ruin.

- 20 My son, attend to my words;
 bend thine ear to my speeches.
- 21 Let them not get away from thine eyes;
 guard them in the midst of thine heart;
- 22 for they are life to them that find them,
 and healing to all their flesh.
- 23 More than any guard-post keep watch over
 thine heart;
 for out of it are the outgoings of life.

- 20 My son, attend to
 my words; incline
 thine ear unto my say-
 ings.
- 21 Let them not de-
 part from thine eyes;
 keep them in the midst
 of thine heart.
- 22 For they *are* life
 unto those that find
 them, and health to all
 their flesh.
- 23 Keep thy heart
 with all diligence; for
 out of it *are* the issues
 of life.

There is an aspect of sameness in these beginnings which is to be relieved by three considerations.—First, they *are* beginnings. One of the characteristics of Scripture is a division like Childe Harold into cantos, or separate sonnets. These paragraphs are distinct, and should be separated by broad margins. They are most conspicuous in the Prophet Isaiah; and, like grapes upon a bunch, each wrapped in its individual rind, but all clustered on the common stem. If we ventured a conjecture, it would be that this suited itself to the Israelitish worship. The synagogue would take one of these cantos and use it for the day. They were of irregular length; but that would allow variety. They had some repetitions; but so have missals and breviaries, that allow of choice on different occasions. Repetition implies fulness; and there was an aim to provide most of the points for recitation on each occasion. What for one reading would seem very same, for many readings would seem wonderfully diversified. This thought explains apparent repetitiousness in many parts of the synagogue collection. Second, these directions to “attend” Solomon seems to prefer to repeat, (see 3:21). And, third, as a mark of his genius, there is always some variety. He always advances upon the thought. There is always some characteristic novelty. And that novelty is the hinge of the purpose, and imbeds its meaning in the very life of the passage. That novelty, in the present instance, is the function of the heart. It circulates life. Give it good blood, and it will throw off disease. Give it bad blood, and it will

produce disease. Give it health enough, and it will disperse incipient mortification. Give it no health, and it will produce mortification. See how capitally Solomon weaves this into experimental godliness. “Attend to my words. Bend thine ear to my speeches. Let them not get away from thine eyes. Guard them in the midst of thine heart; for they are life to them that find them, and healing to all their flesh.” In a usual citadel, if the outposts fall, the citadel is immediately endangered. But in these fortifications, the citadel governs. “Keep watch over thy heart, more than any guard post; for out of it are the outgoings of life.” The English version has it, “Keep thy heart with all diligence.” Others translate,—“Keep thy heart more than all other keeping.” But by either the main beauty is sacrificed. The noun has a prefix (**בָּ**), which denotes “post” or *place*, (see Class XXXIX). The emblem was at first surgical; now military. Fill thy heart with the words of God, and they will be healing to all thy flesh. Guard thy heart as the great central “guard-post,” and no out-station will be cut off. If it be, for a time, the heart will win it again. This is the base of all theology. Give a man a perfect heart, and it will be healing to all his flesh. It will make obedience the most glorious peace. “Keep watch over thy heart more than any other guard-post;” for if other sentry posts fall, they will be retaken. Feed the heart. For the good red blood of God’s truth will be to all our being the very “out-goings” or circulation “of life.”

- | | |
|--|--|
| 24 Remove from thee crookedness of mouth,
and swerving lips put far from thee. | <small>24 Put away from
thee a froward mouth,
and perverse lips put
far from thee.</small> |
| 25 Let thine eyes look right on,
and thine eyelids be level before thee. | <small>25 Let thine eyes
look right on, and let
thine eyelids look
straight before thee.</small> |
| 26 Make smooth the planting-place of thy
foot;
and all thy ways shall be established firmly. | <small>26 Ponder the path
of thy feet, and let all
thy ways be establish-
ed.</small> |
| 27 Turn not to the right or to the left.
Remove thy foot from evil. | <small>27 Turn not to the
right hand nor to the
left: remove thy foot
from evil.</small> |

A signal token of a bad heart is “crookedness of mouth.” The meaning of this is,—saying one thing and doing another.

This is a great symptom of impenitency, that will condemn it in the last day. “**Swerving lips**” are men doing what they did not mean to do. If impenitency were consistent as a whole, it would be less absurd; but Solomon constantly signalizes the fact, that it knows and means, and, therefore, continually speaks, better than it does (2:15). It does not “look right on.” If the wicked, at any given point, would start right forward under the lead of their shrewdest thoughts, it would soon get them to Canaan. This truth Solomon paints by all our organs; in verse twentieth, by the ear; in verse twenty-first, by the eyes; in verse twenty-third, by the heart; in verse twenty-fourth, by the mouth; in verse twenty-sixth by the foot. “*Ponder*” (E. V. v. 26) is an unfortunate translation. It confuses many passages. The primary meaning is to *level*. We doubt if it ever means to *ponder* (Ps. 58:3; 78:50; Prov. 4:26; 5:6, 21; Is. 26:7). The substantive means a scale, because we have to *level* it. Here it means that we are to *level* our paths, just as with another verb (v. 25) we are to let our “*eyelids*” (not “*look*”) (E. V.); for eyelids do not look; but) “*be level before*” us. And, with this meaning, an exquisite sense springs out of the twenty-sixth verse:—“**Make smooth**” *each foot planting*. It is a capital text. As in the fable of the pendulum, we are to endure and make sure each swing by itself. Then all is cared for. We cannot attend to two steps at once. *Make smooth each “planting place of thy foot,”* and there emerges a whole good path. Act for the present, and trust for the future. Act for the present, and thus for the future. “*Make smooth the planting place of thy foot; and all thy ways shall be established firmly.*” “*Turn not to the right or to the left;*” that is, even thou thyself being the judge, as in other passages—(2:3; 5:12; 20:5). How that ought to wither a man!—that if he followed his own eyes, and his own ears, and his own mind, wicked as they are, and did it consistently, God would long ago have led him to redemption. “*Established firmly;*” literally “*made to stand,*” or “*set up.*” It looks to the *throwing up* of the ancient highway. *Level one foot-print, and the whole highway will then be builded.*

CHAPTER V.

- 1 My son, attend to my wisdom;
to my discernment bend down thine ear.
2 To guard deep counsels
and knowledge, let them mount guard over
thy lips.
- My son, attend unto
my wisdom, and bow
thine ear to my under-
standing;
2 That thou mayest
regard discretion, and
that thy lips may keep
knowledge.

This may seem the last utterance (vs. 1-6) of the Wise Man's father (4:4). He begins with the usual entreaties, taking care always to vary them; for I believe they are in no two cases alike. He advances them. They become more abstract, and less voluntary; the implication being that he has given directions by which these less voluntary things may be practically assured. He remembers the grand duty, "Attend." But he says,—"*Attend to my wisdom;*" not in this case,—"*attend to my words.*" **To guard deep counsels and knowledge, let them mount guard over thy lips.**" This will be the third instance of new interpretation by force of the same peculiarity of grammar (see Class I.). In chap. 2:1, 2, the old version has it;—"If thou wilt receive my words, so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding." We translated it;—"If thou wilt take my words so as to point thine ear toward wisdom, thou shalt incline thine heart to discernment." In chap. 2:8 the old version has it,—"He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints." We translated it;—"To keep watch over the paths of judgment, He must also guard the way of His saints." So in the present case (v. 2) the old version has it,—"That thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge." The grammar is precisely the same in each of the three. They begin with an infinitive with **י** (*to*), and end with a future. Strange enough the three old versions are made to defend each other! On this last both Zöckler and Maurer make a comment referring each to the others or to some like case. Zöckler treats of them as though there had been a rule. "*The infinitive with י (to) is followed by the finite verb.*" And Maurer says,—"*Ad structuram confer 1:5; 2:2, et alia;*" while all the while a

plain insisting upon the grammar gives to each of them an otherwise unattainable sense. What a grand Proverb the verse before us! “**To guard deep counsels and knowledge;**” things too involuntary to be gone after *in esse*; *set them to work*; for so the idea is. It is a deep philosophy. To guard the heart, guard its agencies. 1 Tim. 4:7, “Exercise thyself unto godliness.” And this father chooses the most difficult of all guardianships of men, viz., the guardianship of the *tongue*. If “the tongue can no man tame,” then “*to guard deep counsels and knowledge, let them mount guard over thy lips.*”

V. 3. “**For**,” says the Wise Man, the lips are so near us, and whatever is sweet in saying what we list, is so easily tasted, (because the words are so easily said), this watch is, of all other things, the most difficult.

But we must break off just here to study the meaning of “**the Strange Woman.**” She occurs so often in this book (see Class L.) that it is not probable that she is introduced simply to denounce licentiousness. Indeed, she so stands twin picture to Wisdom, that we come to a firm belief that she is introduced as the picture of Impenitence. In fact, in the last case (9:13-18) she has plainly ripened into the express portraiture for Folly. We expound in this way:—The common harlot, is no doubt sufficiently described. The common libertine is no doubt sufficiently admonished. The tempted young man may, no doubt, be legitimately taught; and may learn, in artistic detail, the folly of adultery. But, aback of all this, the thing predominantly meant, and to which the other is sometimes sacrificed, is the spreading forth of Impenitence. Such, let me now distinctly say, is a great typical law (see Introd. § VI.) In history, no doubt, Joshua crossed the Jordan, but the fact even, was ordained to set forth, *in visu*, certain spiritual truth. In prophecy, no doubt, Cyrus was to save the Israelites. But the fact, *pro mente*, was predicted by Isaiah (Isa. 45:1, etc.), less for prediction’s sake than to shadow Another Deliverer. No doubt Babylon was to fall; but the prophecies to that effect (Is. 48:20), beyond all purpose of prophetical proof were pictures of the gospel. And I wish to say, for it will often have to be remarked, especially in other books, that

the picture may be often violated in the direction of the lower end (Is. 12 : 8; 44 : 28) (I mean the mere historic detail); in order to complete philosophically, the more spiritual representation. So therefore with the "*Strange Woman*." Her errand, of the highest sort, is to personate Impenitency. And if, as she comes into the text, there is sometimes a too formal speech (see 5 : 6), it is the shadowing of the superior thought, without any damage to the more immediate signification.—

- | | |
|---|---|
| 3 For the lips of a strange woman distil honey ;
and her mouth is smoother than oil ; | 3 For the lips of a
strange woman drop as
an honey-comb, and
her mouth is smoother
than oil : |
| 4 but her end bitter as wormwood ;
sharp as the edges of a sword . | 4 But her end is bit-
ter as wormwood, sharp
as a two-edged sword . |
| 5 Her feet go down to death .
Her steps take hold of Sheol . | 5 Her feet go down
to death ; her steps
take hold on hell . |
| 6 Lest she should lay smooth the path of life ,
her tracks are shifting . She does not get to know . | 6 Lest thou shouldest
ponder the path of life,
her ways are moveable,
that thou canst not
know them . |

"**The lips of a strange woman distil honey.**" That is, our "*lips*" (v. 2) are so near to us, and saying what we like is so sweet, that it will specially "*guard deep counsels and knowledge*" (v. 2) to cause them to "*mount guard*" each day over our "*lips*." "**Her mouth is smoother than oil.**" That is, not only the life of a Strange Woman, in all its adulterous detail, is sweet both to herself and her victims, but such, too, is the impenitent enchantment. "*The lips of a strange woman distil honey.*" The charm of Impenitency is, that it is in our very tastes. The choice of Hercules calls for a double guard, because we have to reject that which is on our very palate. V. 4, "**But her end bitter as wormwood.**" Whose end? Is it the Woman's end, or her victim's end? See next verse: "**Her feet go down to death.**" Whose feet? Is it the Woman's feet, or her victim's feet? A like controversy besets, 3 : 25. See remarks p. 49 as to "*the destruction of the wicked.*" Take the strange woman as a harlot, and the ambiguity clouds us a little; but take her as Impenitence, and it but adds to the vigor of the picture. Already (see above) we have reached a case where the higher thought

breaks through the crust of the lower, where it spoils the precision of the type. If the Strange Woman is Impenitence, she lies *within*, so to speak, her wretched victim. If her "*lips distil honey*," it is honey on the very lips of the tempted man. If "*her feet*" are lost, it is when his are. Nay, there is a still further identification. Not only is Sin a part of her victims, but she is a sufferer in her very self. That is, "*her end is bitter as wormwood*;" not only in torments of the flesh, but in torments of her own nature. She becomes bitter herself. Though once like honey upon the lips, "*her afterwards*," as the expression is, becomes itself bitter as wormwood. "*Sharp as to the edges*," literally. *Mouths* the Hebrew has it. The edge of a sword was called its *mouth*. "*Sharp as a sword of mouths*," some would render it; i. e., as "*a two-edged sword*." So it is in the English version. But apart from the fact that a two-edged sword is not necessarily sharp, we build upon a less idiomatic rendering: "*Sharp, as to the edges, as a sword*." V. 5, "*Her feet go down to death*," that is, in the instance of the harlot, herself *with* her votaries; in the instance of Impenitence, herself *in* her votaries. "**H**er steps take hold of Sheol." Not "*hell*" (E. V.) as the name of the dire Gehenna; I mean not in that language; not the grave merely, for that is the fate of everybody; but Sheol, or our dead condition, as a symbol; "*hell*" under a figure; just as *eternal ruin* is pictured under the name of "*death*." The next verse is one of those already alluded to (vs. 3-5), too much in the track of a pronounced theology, to be thought of as merely describing a bad woman. "**L**est she should lay smooth the path of life;" that is, not "*ponder*" it (E. V.) (see also 4: 26), but "*smooth*" it, so that she can enter upon it; "*her tracks are shifting*," that is, wandering all about. They do not remain the same, for then she might detect them. When disgusted with one course of sin she glides into another. The Strange Woman is constantly marked as holding the reins by bustle (9: 13). Let a poor sinner think, and he might be saved. When quieted from one task, behold another! **L**est she should smooth the path of life, she never finds it out, because her own tracks are eternally wandering round. This text has caused a great trouble with

commentators; but it seems to be because there is such terse packing of the Hebrew that we do not unriddle it. The absence of "it" at the end is, perhaps, the reason. We might supply this particle without violence to the grammar. The language is about this: "*The path of life (lest she make smooth ; her tracks are shifting;) she does not get to know.*" The English version has scarce a meaning; and Zöckler's ("*The path of life she never treadeth ; her steps stray she knoweth not whither*") has excellent meaning, but decided violation of text. The question whether it be "*Lest she smooth,*" or *Lest thou smooth;* and whether it be "*She does not get to know,*" or *Thou dost not get to know,* cannot be settled: such is the verbal form. And both will make equal sense. So that there is no need to settle it. The third person feminine,—"*She does not know,*" comes in as well, or more probably as best; because, with the Strange Woman as Impenitence, what she does not know, and what we will not know, are precisely the same, if we become her victims.

7 And now, ye children, hearken unto me,
and turn not from the words of my
mouth.

7 Hear me now therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth.

8 Let thy way be far off from her;
and approach not the door of her house;

8 Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house;

Here, perhaps, Solomon begins again himself after concluding what his father taught him. If so, the plural address, "**Ye children**," which is here resumed, if thrown in merely to mark the change, he finds it convenient to abandon almost as soon as it is employed. "**Thy way**," he says, in the next verse. V. 8, "**Her**." He re-echoes his father's instruction, and repeats and extends it. "**Let thy way be far off from her.**" As a harlot, the lesson is, of course, plain. As Impenitence, it is the fundamental wisdom in avoiding mischief. *Obsta principiis!* Such is the figurative representation. If a man would not be ruined by Folly, he must turn in another direction, and go not near "**the door of her house.**"

9 lest thou give thy powers to others,
and thy years to the cruel;

9 Lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel;

10 lest strangers be filled with thy strength,
and thy hard toils be in the house of a stranger;

to Lest strangers be
filled with thy wealth,
and thy labours be in
the house of a stranger:

"Thy power." One's strength may be given to vice, but not in the same degree, as it is to impenitence. If a man is impenitent, all his possessions are for others. He is trading on what is not his own (Luke 16 : 12). His possessions will be absolute pests (Ec. 11 : 9). All his wealth will go to the righteous (Ec. 2 : 26). The Bible distinctly assumes that all men are to be useful (Ec. 5 : 9); the righteous partly to themselves; the wicked only to the righteous. If a man listens to Impenitence (v. 10) "*Strangers (will) be filled with (his) strength; and (his) hard toils (will) be in the house of a stranger.*" And one keenest torment of the damned, will be to find that they are working hard in the very pit for the universe; submitting to the sentence (Matt. 25 : 28), "Take, therefore, the talent from him and give it to him that hath ten talents." The adulterer might make himself a bankrupt, and get himself sold (v. 10) for his transgression; but that is a trifle compared with the sweeping surrender that must be made of all by the finally impenitent.

11 and thou groan in thine after lot,
when thy flesh and thy roundness are
consumed,

11 And thou mourn
at the last, when thy
flesh and thy body are
consumed,

12 and say, How have I hated admonition,
and my heart despised reproof,

12 And say, How
have I hated instruction,
and my heart despised reproof;

13 and I not heard the voice of them that
directed me,
nor to my teachers inclined mine ear!

13 And have not
obeyed the voice of my
teachers, nor inclined
mine ear to them that
instructed me!

14 I soon became like any wicked man
in the midst of the congregation and as-
sembly.

14 I was almost in all
evil in the midst of the
congregation and as-
sembly.

"Groan." This word marks, more than "*mourn*" (E. V.), the deep grief of the lost at the wasting of all their opportunities. "**Thine after lot.**" The noun is difficult to translate. It means *thine afterwards*. "**At the last**" (E. V.) will not answer; because long before the very last, the sinner may wake up to his insanity, and many times may repeat these occasions of inexpressible remorse. "**And thy roundness.**" Both these

words mean “*flesh*.” In the paucity of our English, we go to the root of one of them, which is *swelling*, “*roundness*,” and translate by that. The very “*flesh*” which seduces the sinner, is that which is to bear the eternal penalty. V. 12. “**Despised.**” Grave as the sinner’s fears are; and hard, all the time, as is the load of his guilt; yet, in wordly engrossment, he does look down upon the things of the gospel. It is a strange confusion. Gravely asked, he admits the supremacy of religion; and yet uppermost in his heart is a quiet contempt for it. V. 14. “**Soon.**” We have examined the eighteen cases where this word occurs in the Scripture, and in no one of them does it mean “*almost*,” as in the English Version. It is composed of two words, one a substantive, meaning *little*, and the other a particle meaning *as*. “*As a little*” is, therefore, the seed of the thought. To do a thing, therefore, “*as a little thing*,” may mean to do it as a thing of *small importance* (1 Chron. 16:19), or to do it *easily* (Gen. 26:10), or, where the idea of time is understood (and that is its most frequent bearing), to do it “*soon*.” This is its sense in the following passages:—Job 32:22;* Ps. 2:12;† Ps. 81:14;‡ Ps. 94:17.§ In the present passage, the inspired man means to teach how “*soon*” the despising of admonition brings even the instructed youth down to the level of any sinner. “**I soon became like any wicked man.**” There are three meanings that this clause is capable of, and we have to choose, with some difficulty, as to the proof between them. “*Wicked man*” has the threesold ambiguousness that creates the doubt. It is, indeed, a mere adjective, meaning *evil*. It may mean (1) *an evil man*; or it may mean (2) *an evil thing*, in the sense of *a calamity*; or it may mean (3) *an evil thing*, in the sense of *a wickedness*. If it mean the second (2) the verse would be “I was soon in all disaster in the midst of the congregation and of the assembly;” that is, under sentence for adultery and, in the wider view, under condemnation as impenitent. This is not an impossible meaning, but uses the preposition “*in*” (in the first clause), in rather a peculiar signi-

* “In so doing my Maker would soon take me away.” † “For soon is His wrath kindled.” ‡ “I should soon have subdued their enemies.” § “My soul had soon dwelt in silence.”

fication. If, again, we choose the third (3) the verse would mean, "I was soon in all wickedness in the midst of the congregation and the assembly." But if we choose the first (1), we call in the *bēth essentiæ*, the special meaning of "*in*" where it becomes equivalent to "*as*" (see Class XXVI). Thus, we believe, it becomes most expressive. The religiously educated separate their case from the mass. The inspired man warns them that this is altogether an error. There is a grand resemblance. In fact there is a depth of iniquity where the well educated despise reproof. They "*soon*" become "*like any wicked man*;" and while they still arrogate to themselves places with Christians, to the eye of the world they are like any evil man "*in the midst of the congregation and assembly.*"

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>15 Drink waters out of thine own cistern ;
Yea, running waters from within thine own
well.</p> <p>16 Let thy fountains overflow abroad ;
as streams of water in the open squares.</p> <p>17 Let them be for thyself alone,
and for no strangers with thee.</p> <p>18 Let thy fountain be blessed ;
and have joy from the wife of thy youth.</p> | <p>15 Drink waters out
of thine own cistern,
and running waters out
of thine own well.</p> <p>16 Let thy fountains
be dispersed abroad,
<i>and</i> rivers of water in
the streets.</p> <p>17 Let them be only
thine own, and <i>not</i>
strangers' with thee.</p> <p>18 Let thy fountain
be blessed ; and re-
joice with the wife of
thy youth.</p> |
|--|---|

This is a most elaborate trope built upon usages scarce thought of in our land. Solomon lays it more thoroughly bare in Solomon's Song, 4 : 12. "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." Wells were important private properties, and matters of jealousy (Ex. 2 : 17) and bargain (John 4 : 5). Proprietors seem to have sealed springs up to keep them uncontaminated. Solomon himself is said to have owned one some fifty yards above his fish pools, which he kept "sealed, to preserve the waters for his own drinking." See Maundrell ("Journey"). The type, then, in matters of marriage, is complete. "**Drink waters out of thine own cistern ; yea, running waters from within thine own well.**" "*From within,*" literally, *from the middle of*. The expression is not unintentional. The habit was to protect the *middle*, or, we should rather translate, the *head* of the spring; for the lower

water, or as the next verse calls it, the “*overflow*” of the stream could not and need not be sealed or protected. V. 16. “**Let thy fountains overflow abroad; as streams of water in the open squares.**” The analogy of Scripture would make this a reference to offspring. “Thus the mother, Sarah, is compared to a well spring (Is. 51:1), and Judah, the patriarch, is spoken of as “waters” (Is. 48:1); as also Israel (Num. 24:7; Ps. 68:26).”—Umbreit. V. 17. “**Let them be for thyself alone and for no strangers with thee.**” This would seem inconsistent at first with the idea of flowing all abroad. The fountain of the most recluse court had to break away through the wall, and find itself at last in the streets and open squares. The spring of Solomon broke its way to Kedron. But the Proverb, without troubling itself with the type, presses for two things,—the sanctity of the mother and the child; the sanctity of the mother, and, therefore, the child. “*Let them be for thyself alone,*” i. e., both the fountain and the issue. And, lifting this to the higher region of Impenitency, it is easy to see how wisdom must be a sealed fount, and how we must keep the world out of it, if we would drink its living waters.

- 19 A loving hind and graceful ibex,
let her breasts satisfy thee at all times;
and be thou always insane with her love.

*19 Let her be as the
loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts
satisfy thee at all times, and be thou ravished
always with her love.*

“**Ibex.**” Where a word occurs but once in the Hebrew, its translation is often a matter of conjecture. These gazelle-like and light built tenants of mountainous heights are all beautiful, and are all Scriptural types of objects of affection. It makes little difference what is the precise translation. “**Let her breasts satisfy thee;**” rather a sacrifice of the strict type to the grander lesson. “*Satisfy*” means in the way of *drink*. The writer seems unable to keep his thought off from the sinner as at the breasts of Wisdom. “*Let her breasts satisfy thee, or give thee drink at all times.*” We are to resort to no other fountain. And then comes in a very peculiar word, which is repeated in the 20th and 23d verses, which comes from *reeling* and *staggering* in drink. We are to be “*ravished*” (E. V.)

with gospel wisdom; we are to be entirely entranced with it; we are not to let the world come in, and foul her spring; we are not to let the offspring of our life be sin and folly; we are not (v. 20) to be "*insane*" or "*ravished*" (E. V.) "**over a strange woman;**" or in miserable engrossment with Impenitence, and seduction into the ways of the world, (in the figurative language of the book) "**embrace the bosom of an alien**" :—

20 And why, my son, be insane over a strange | ²⁰ And why wilt
woman, thou, my son, be rav-
and embrace the bosom of an alien? ished with a strange
woman, and embrace
the bosom of a
stranger?

"**My son;**" a rare instance where this address does not begin a canto. "**Why?**" The question is intended to be pressed. The well raised impenitent cannot answer. The commerce with the "*Strange Woman*" breeding a spurious and patricidal offspring, is so plainly mad, that the rightly educated impenitent cannot possibly answer the Wise Man's question.

He goes on, therefore, to the philosophic close, as in most of the other passages; where the texts become so measured and complete as to lift us, in spite of ourselves, above the contemplation of mere adultery to the more systematic thoughts connected with our whole impenitence :—

21 For directly in God's sight are the ways | ²¹ For the ways of
of a man; man are before the
and all his paths He levels down. eyes of the Lord, and
he pondereth all his
goings.

"**A man,**" i. e., any man. He speaks now of both saint and sinner. "**Directly in God's sight.**" The word is a very peculiar one—*confronting God's eyes*. The meaning is, that directly in God's eyes are the ways of every man, as if there were no other creature in the universe: as though the Wise Man were saying,—Why, because the way seems smooth, and you seem helped in your ambitious schemes, do you go on in your impenitency, and embrace the bosom of this wanton? Why do you side with Folly, because your way seems helped, and you go on naturally, and, to some view, wisely in your worldliness? "**For**" (v. 21) the way of every man is directly in the sight of

God. He takes the most emphatic interest in our schemes, whether we are doing well or ill. He helps us either in sinning or doing right. As He Himself expresses it,—“**He levels all (one's) paths.**” Not that He approves the drunkard; not that we are to involve Him in the folly of any sin (see 16 : 2 and 21 : 2); but that if a man desires to drink, He leve's the way for him. If he wishes liquor, He gives it: if he desire, inebriety, He gives the intoxicating sense; if he desires to steal, He gives the eye and the nerve. Nay, He is directly eyeing the track of sin, and makes almost providential way for it. So that the moral impenitent is not to imagine, because God intervenes in his behalf, that, therefore, it is righteous to go on, “For directly in God's sight are the ways of (any) man, and all his paths He levels down.” The Divinity seems to help the struggling, whether saint or sinner; and directly in His sight the struggle passes, and by the very statutes of His nature, He intervenes always and gives a hand.

But, the inspired man goes on profoundly,—

- 22 His very iniquities trap him, if he be a wicked man; and he is holden by the cords of his sin. ²² His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.

The thought that he is prospered; the grave moral look that his enterprise wears from its being *levelled* as one of the very ways of Providence; the very impulse that the debauchee receives, because his passions and his loves seem to be given to him by the hand of Heaven, all help in one characteristic of a *trap*. “**His very iniquities trap him.**” The arms of the Fair Deceiver become the levelled pathway of a snare. And he is not only caught by the smooth promise of his work, but actually made stronger and stronger as he sins. We have here, therefore, the great doctrine of religion, that Sin itself, as the Strange Woman, is the great trap for the sinner, and the great **cord** that keeps him in his sins: just as darkness, by being dark itself, keeps a man dark, and is the great dungeon that is to bind the man under the power of its eternal chains (Jude 6th). “**If he be a wicked man;**” not “*if*,” in actual Hebrew, but *if* required to express an apposition. The throwing in of this

clause is simply to provide for the fact that verse 21st has been speaking “*of (any) man* ;” and this verse undertakes to state a fact, “*if he be a wicked*” one.

- 23** In his very self he dies for lack of discipline ; and by the greatness of his folly is he made insane. | **23** He shall die without instruction ; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

“*In his very self.*” The pronoun here is not to be lost sight of in its emphasis. The “*very iniquities*” of a man (v. 22,) are himself acting out his own nature. If the very iniquities of a man are a trap to him, and every sin ties a fresh “*cord*” upon him, then the figure of *death* is happily applied to himself as sinful. “*In his very self he dies.*” There is no hope of him. If the sinner in himself is bound ; and every sin ties a fresh cord upon him ; and every act is nothing but a sin ; then what possibly can set him free ? He might be freed by wholesome discipline : but as discipline is a thing he hates (v. 12.), what can force it upon him but a sovereign power ? He grows insane by his very folly, made madder by his very madness ; and this is the summing up to all this chapter —“*In his very self he dies by lack of discipline, and by the greatness of his folly is he made insane.*” “*Made insane*” is the same word as in verses 19, 20.

CHAPTER VI.

- 1** My son, if thou art under surety to thy friend, thou hast stricken thy hand for a stranger. | **My son, if thou be**
surety for thy friend,
if thou hast stricken
thy hand with a
stranger,
- 2** Thou art snared by the speeches of thy mouth. Thou hast been caught by the speeches of thy mouth. | **2** Thou art snared
with the words of thy
mouth, thou art taken
with the words of thy
mouth.

HERE again, as in the instance of the Strange Woman, we are to settle for all the book (see Classes L. and LII.) how we are to regard this picture. (1.) Are we to consider it merely as a warning against suretyships? or (2) are we to consider it

merely as an allegorical picture? or (3), as in the instance of the Strange Woman, are we to unite the two? We are opposing all the commentators in not choosing the first. But we are inclined to the belief that this is a religious book. We mean by that, that it is purely spiritual (see Introd. § 6.); and that it took the seat, in those days, of gospel teaching; that there may be imagined in it only meanings like those we might find in the Apostle Paul; that there are no Poor Richard maxims in it, or worldly policies just for policy or prudence' sake; that, therefore, a mere guard against suretyships would not be consistent for the book; that suretyships are often right, and, like giving (Prov. 28: 27), and lending (Matt. 5: 42), and bearing each other's burdens (Gal. 6: 2), a positive duty; and that, therefore, in all the instances in the Proverbs (6: 1, 11: 15, 17: 18, 20: 16, 27: 13), which we will expound when they come in turn, a bald advice, *in forma lit.*, is not the thing we can possibly conceive. Nor, either, can we take the second choice, and suppose the whole to be but a gospel allegory. Suretyships are bad things, and border so upon the confines of religious evil, that a wise man might easily feel strongly in their case; and, therefore, (though even on a lower plot,) we would imagine them as standing like the picture of the Harlot. Let the passer by take the warning of the lower truth; and let the wisdom in respect to suretyships be considered as truthfully expressed; but, (not at all as itself the great object of Solomon,) let it rather be considered as the machinery for a much higher lesson; one more religious in its cast, and more richly deserving a place in the inspired Scripture. V. 1. "**My son, if thou art under surety to thy Friend.**" The word translated "surety" in the English Version, means primarily to *interweave*: and that rather in an intransitive sense. A man who *interweaves* a stranger (Gen. 43: 9), or, rather, is *interwoven with* him, is one implicated in the same account, and therefore who has *become surety* for him. This is the source of all the meaning; and in Prov. 24: 21, the old meaning of *being interwoven*, or of *mixing up*, is obviously maintained. "My son, fear thou the Lord and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change." This word, *interweave*, requires no preposition, but fits directly

on its object. To *interweave* a man means to endorse him; that is, to be mixed up with him on his note. So to be "surety for a stranger," in three places (Prov. 11:15, 20:16, 27:13), is not expressed by help of a preposition, but the verb fits right down upon its accusative case. The preposition, therefore, in the first verse adds something, and it points us to the Friend, whom we secure; not to the man for whom we go security. Our translators, therefore, are wrong in confounding the personages in the first and second clause. Moreover, they are wrong in putting the two clauses in apposition. The commentators are still further wrong who repeat the word "*if*" to all the clauses down to the third verse. The word "*if*" belongs only where it stands. The meaning is, "*If thou art under surety to thy Friend, thou hast stricken thy hand for a stranger;*" the stranger being he who seduced thee on his bond; the Friend being He to whom the bond is to be paid; and as another grand inference, "*Thou art snared by the speeches of thy mouth. Thou hast been caught by the speeches of thy mouth.*" There seem to have been forms not gone through with by the pen, but by the hands and the lip. The terrible scourge of securityship is meant to be depicted; and that fearful trait of it, that it is a *snares* which the mere breath of the lips, like the mere stroke of the pen in our day, sufficed to enter. The warning, therefore, is full against suretyships. But let us complete the case:—

- 3 Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself; for thou hast come into the hand of thy friend:—
Go cast thyself under foot, and impetrue thy friend.
4 Give not sleep to thine eyes, or drowsy heaviness to thine eyelids.
5 Get snatched as a roe from the hand; yea, as a bird from the hand of the en-snarer.

3 Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself; when thou art come into the hand of thy friend; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend.

4 Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids.

5 Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.

"Now." This word is an actual one, and intended to convey intensity. "For thou hast come;" not "when thou art come" (E. V.). The inspired man wishes to press the idea of

the creditor. “**Cast thyself under foot**.” (literally, *Let thyself be trampled upon*). The English Version says, “*Humble thyself*.” We try to retain the extremeness of the humiliation. “*Make sure thy friend*,” say the translators; but the word means to *press heavily, to urge*. *Go down under his feet*, “**and importune thy Friend**.” V. 4, “**Drowsy heaviness to thine eyelids**.” Not only do not sleep, but do not drowse. V. 5, “**Get thyself snatched**.” It is a Niphil. We cannot snatch or “*deliver*” (E. V.) *ourselves* from the bond when we have once gone down upon it. But all this is an appeal to “*the Friend*” (v. 1); and that, obviously, is not the bond-giver who has seduced us to endorse him, and is as helpless as we to get anybody off; but the bond-holder; and the great remedy, therefore, for a securityship is to go beg off in the most unspeakable abjectness, and to press and to urge the creditor to release our name. Now I say, This is not, *simpliciter*, the gist of the inspiration. But, if we introduce the gospel: if we see in this a great picture of our guilt: if we see in the bond-holder the Friend to whom we are to appeal: if we see in the bond-giver, Sin in all the seductive forms in which it has come down to us from the original transgressor: if the gripe of the suretyship is the law, and the form of the law is the broken covenant; if the act of our “*striking hands*” is the way we have accepted the curse of Adam, and the way we have volunteered under this “*stranger's*” burdens, then the whole passage becomes complete, and we are ready for the appeal, “*Go cast thyself under foot and importune thy Friend*.” That is the very gospel. “**Give not sleep to thine eyes**.” An eternal bond, with our names down upon it, a bond signed first by Adam, and due to our Great Father in the heavens, is one where we have been suffering our names to stand. We have really struck hands for a stranger. And now the only method is to go at once to the “**FRIEND**,” and by humbleness and urgency push the measure of an entire release.

For this end, what better than the picture of the ant? If the sinner succeeds, it must be by earnest pressing. And for this he is altogether too sluggish:—

- 6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard ;
see her ways, and be wise :
7 who, having no counsellor,
director, or ruler,
lays up her food in the summer,
yea, through harvest has gathered what
she is to eat.

6 Go to the ant, thou
sluggard : consider her
ways, and be wise :
7 Which having no
guide, overseer, or ru-
ler,
8 Provideth her meat
in the summer, and
gathereth her food in
the harvest.

"*Go to the ant*," a common emblem in the East. "*See her ways*;" not necessarily "*consider*" (E. V.) *Seeing* is the Hebrew; and it is enough. V. 7, "*No counsellor, director or ruler*." "*Kadi, Wali, and Emir*," says Zöckler, as corresponding Arabic titles; and most of the expositors inquire as to the official difference. If there be any, we would attribute to the first, decision, or mere counsel; to the second, law-making, or absolute direction; and to the third, overseeing, or active government. Without these three in the East, what horrible indolence !

- 9 How long wilt thou lie, O sluggard ?
When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep ?
10 A little sleep ! A little drowsing !
A little folding of the hands to rest !
11 So comes thy poverty like one that travels ;
and thy want like an armed man.

9 How long wilt thou
sleep, O sluggard ?
when wilt thou arise
out of thy sleep ?
10 Yet a little sleep,
a little slumber, a little
folding of the hands to
sleep :
11 So shall thy pov-
erty come as one that
travelleth, and thy
want as an armed man.

"*How long ?*" This is the same appeal as in chap 1 : 22. In the higher spiritual sense, slothfulness is one of the names of Folly. The appeal, "*How long ?*" is one of the constant utterances of the preacher of the word. V. 10, "*A little sleep !*" A taunting irony. An imitation, not an actual quotation, of what the sluggard is always saying. V. 11, "*So comes thy poverty like one that travels.*" A most dreadful simile ! One that has waited for a fight, knows how slowly the armed men seem to come up. They may be hours passing the intervening space. There is no sound of them. They are not on the roads, or on the air, either in sight or echo; and yet they are *coming on !* The intervening time is the sluggard's sleeping time; and it seems an age. But his want will come "*like one that travels ;*" doom-like and certain, like the tramp of armed men. All sloth-

fulness is, no doubt rebuked; but especially that which has all heaven for its garnered stores; all hell for its experience of “**want**;” all time for its season of neglect; and all eternity to break upon its sleep; and to follow the coming of the “**armed man**.” Beginning with the idea of a poor man involved on another's bond, and connecting us in this way with tempters and with the parents of our race, the Wise Man opened the chapter with an appeal to the soul's earnestness. Go press upon thy Friend. Give not sleep to thine eyes, or drowsing to thine eyelids. “Get snatched as a roe from the hand; yea, as a bird from the hand of the Ensnarer.” There followed a picture of the “**Sluggard**” as resisting all this heat.

And now, without a change of subject, (for the codex does not make the usual marginal separation), a terse picture of the Sluggish Man is given in what might seem at first view no more serious than mere laziness:—

- 12 A worthless man; a man utterly in vain; walking in crookedness of mouth;
- 13 talking with his eyes; speaking with his feet;
- 14 motioning with his fingers;
- 14 with upturnings in his heart; fabricating evil;
- will be putting forth grounds of quarrel all the time.

12 A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth.

13 He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers;

14 Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord.

The sluggard, seeming to be harmless, is found to be a perfect Pandora's box of moral and governmental discords. V. 12, “**A worthless man**.” This is the easy entrance by which the Proverb comes upon the thought. (That is, *a man of Belial*, not a man of *no elevation* (*Umbreit*) nor a man of *no yoke*, i. e., un-governed (*Fischer*), but a man of *no use*); “**A man utterly in vain**.” These words grew in the end to mean *wickedness*; but the inception of the thought was an utter *worthlessness*. Yet this empty *sluggardism*, the inspired prophet goes on to preach, works positive mischief. In the first place, it **walks “in crookedness of mouth.”** It says one thing, and does another. It proclaims the goodness of the Almighty; and admits the need of His commandments; and aspires to all that is in the gospel.

It says, "*A little more sleep!*" and then goes on slumbering for forty years. It is a constant life of professing one set of principles, and going on in another. And now the Wise Man proclaims: This cannot be done without calamity to other men. V. 13, **He talks "with his eyes."** He may say what he please; his eyes do the talking. Literally, *nipping* or *clipping* or *pinching* with the eyes. The word occurs in other Proverbs (10: 10; 16: 30). In spite of himself the sluggard, however active in worldly matters, discourses with his very eyes; so as to lead other men away from the paths of safety. "**Speaking with his feet,**" when he turns with them into the paths of ruin. All he does is a sermon to other men. **He motions "with his fingers."** And smooth as may seem to be his daily history, yet (v. 14) "**Upturnings (are) in his heart.**" No one can brave hell without having some desperate malady within; and the Wise Man would teach that this cannot expend itself upon itself, but goes out all abroad. He is "**fabricating evil.**" And then, as the great *apodosis* to all these preliminary touches, he is just a *sore* in the universe. "**He will be putting forth grounds of quarrel all the time.**"

"**Wherefore**" (v. 15), if a thing be so ruinous; if it be a fountain of sin; if it be sending forth corruption in such a way as to increase the mass of it, and never diminish it; if it be putting forth causes of quarrel (v. 14) both with God and man, then that thing must be *crushed*. We would expect a sharp, clean end. If it be a root, it must be threaded to its very eye, and all the life of it must be traced and crushed quite out of it in the soil:—

15 Wherefore his crushing shall come suddenly;
at a stroke shall he be broken, and there
be no remedy.

15 Therefore shall
his calamity come sud-
denly; suddenly shall
he be broken without
remedy.

"**Motioning**" (v. 13) is the same word (v. 20) from which "law" is derived. It means "*directing.*" If a man is a procrastinating impenitent; in other words, a spiritual "*sluggard;*" he cannot help by his very "*fingers,*" that is, by his most industrious toil, "*directing*" his neighbor in like procrastination

Now the Lord hates this ruin. In other words, such centres of death must be an abomination to any government:—

- 16 These six things Jehovah hates; yea, seven are an abomination to His very soul:—
- 17 Lofty eyes; a lying tongue; and hands that shed innocent blood;
- 18 a heart fabricating empty devices; feet that run swift to evil;
- 19 a deceived witness whose breath is lies; and he that puts grounds of quarrel among brethren.

16 These six things doth the LORD hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him;	17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood;
18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief;	19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and him that soweth discord among brethren.

This, curtly, is a restatement of the picture just passed (vs. 12-14); not exactly, but ripened a little and advanced into more mature expression. “**Lofty eyes**,” might seem to have little to do with the “*worthless man*” (v. 12); but a man is a man of *emptiness*, solely because he is arrogantly depending, in divers ways, upon himself. Humility is the very first lesson toward salvation (see v. 3). A man could not live a whole life long taking “a little more sleep,” if he had not “*lofty eyes*,” arrogantly depending upon something that is within himself. Then comes, therefore, “**a lying tongue**.” The movements of such a man are all deceitful. Then comes, as an inference from this, “**hands that shed innocent blood**.” The movements of a deceived man are all deadly. The amiable may be fairly stung by such rude speech; but the Wise Man intends to imply that a deceived impenitence deceives and festers all about it. It is the murderousness that the sound universe constitutionally is forced to cast out. The worldly father that misguides his son, sheds his blood. It is astonishing how much there is in the Bible of this cruel language.* V. 18. “**A heart fabricating empty devices**.” If but “one thing is needful,” and a lost man is only heaping up mischief, then all his business answers to our text. Stop him anywhere, and he is doing what the Proverb here teaches; and because “he sleeps not” (4: 16) the more rapidly he runs down to ruin. That is, the more busy the most industrious impenitent, the more he answers to

* Ps. 5:9; Is. 1:21; Matt. 12:34.

the trait, that “**his feet run swift to evil.**” V. 19. Then come the last two:—“**a deceived witness whose breath is lies,**” which is intended to teach in maturer way what was intimated in the thirteenth verse.—First, all men are witnesses. God has no other exponent of Himself than the intelligent creation. Second, lost men are “*deceived witnesses.*” Let us be very express about this, for it occurs in many passages of the Proverbs (12:17; 14:5, 25; 19:5, 9; 21:28); and this translation of “*deceived*” rather than *deceiving*, is necessary in almost every case to avoid tautology. The original is, a “*witness of a lie.*” The meaning is, one who observes facts in such a way as to be *a deceived witness*. This is the startling truth in respect to the impenitent man. He is spiritually blind, and, therefore, he sees erroneously. The Wise Man states many truths about this deadly symptom (14:5, 25; 19:5). Christ describes it. He says it is the light within us being darkness. They do not excuse it. Any but the sluggard might escape it, and get into the light. They denounce it. Its very “*breath is lies.*” The man, deceived himself, cannot keep from deceiving others. He deceives unconsciously. Whether he wake or sleep his breath goes and comes. His example is as unconscious as his breath. He teaches with his fingers. And, as a festering distress, he “**puts grounds of quarrel**” between God and himself and the rest of creation. “**These six**” and “**yea, seven;**” tricks of Oriental rhetoric; of no meaning, as to the sums; and only brought forward here, and in other parts, to add vivacity and definiteness to the style of asseveration. As to the order of these seven things, Zöckler notices a quaint conceit,—that the list goes steadily downward, “*eyes,*” “*tongue,*” “*hands,*” “*heart,*” “*feet.*” Such things, *oculo Dei*, are not an accident; but are of the lesser orders that are observable in the whole creation.

- 20 Keep watch, my son, of thy father's commandment,
and repel not what thy mother directs.

20 My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother.

The Wise Man, intending another picture of the Strange Woman, gives the usual hint of its significance, by prefacing it with the figure of Wisdom. “**Thy father's commandment:**”

all superiors' commandments; pre-eminently God's commandment. We have already noticed (1:8) the fifth commandment as comprehending the first five; just as the tenth commandment comprehends the latter five. They ought to be painted so in churches. Handed down so, we verily believe, to Moses, each table must have carried five commandments. Honoring our father, in all the broad meaning of that term, is the first commandment *in*, not "*with*" (E. V.) "promise" (Eph. 6:2).

- 21 Bind them upon thine heart forever;
tie them about thy neck.

| 21 Bind them con-
tinually upon thine
heart, and tie them
about thy neck.

A most philosophical sentence. First, "**Bind them upon thine heart forever**," because through all eternity these commandments will be the very highest object of affection. Holiness will be the greatest treasure of the blessed. And, second, "**Tie them about thy neck**" for a still higher reason. Holiness is a bright ornament. It is precious on its own account. It is worthy, not on account of what it does, or of what it seems, but of what it is. That is, if we neither had joy in it, nor won profit by it, it would be glorious like a necklace upon the blind, intrinsically, and on its own account.

- 22 When thou walkest, she shall lead thee;
when thou liest down, she shall guard thee;
and when thou wakest up, she shall be
herself communing with thee.

| 22 When thou goest,
it shall lead thee; when
thou sleepest, it shall
keep thee; and when
thou awakest, it shall
talk with thee.

"**She.**" The Wise Man steps back with strange abruptness upon the old personification (4:8, 9). He would prepare more effectually for the twin picture of the Strange Woman (v. 24). We have noticed these rhetoric hints taken up sometimes almost at the verse, and dropped as soon as they have served their turn. "My sons," as a plural address, makes way, as we have seen, for the Wise Man's father (4:1), to whom he resigns the singular title, (4:10); and then when that episode is done, he marks it by again saying, "*my sons*" (5:7), but drops back into the singular almost in the next words. "**She**," therefore, means *Wisdom*; and she is hurried back upon the stage to

confront significantly her rival, *Folly*. “**L**ead thee;” so that thou shalt never lose a step (4:11, 12). “**G**uard thee;” so that thou shalt never meet an evil (12:21).* “**H**erself.” The same Wisdom that guides and guards, is *herself* our intelligent companion. She not only guides us for the very best, but amuses us all through our journey by the very best entertainments for our nature.

V. 2, “**F**or,” stating now the more immediate method:—

- 23** For the commandment is a lamp, and what
is directed is a light;
and in the way of life is admonitory dis-
cipline;

23 For the command-
ment is a lamp; and
the law is light; and
reproofs of instruction
are the way of life:

“**A lamp**,” and one so magic in its light that the Christian has never taken a step since he was converted, (and perhaps we may say, before), that has not in some way sped him on the road. He travels better than he thinks. “**The way of life**:” the way *to* life; but also, as these are all pregnant expressions, that way which is itself life. To walk on this way is itself to live. And now, as *way* in Hebrew is used adverbially, as (“by”) the way of the sea, beyond Jordan” (Is. 9:1), we have marked it so here. We have put “*in*” before it, though not in the original. And our reason was, that if we made “*discipline*” a “*way*,” we spoiled the metaphor. The “*commandment*” as a “*lamp*,” and “*what is directed*” as a “*light*,” is best seen as shining on the way, and in apposition, in that respect, with “**admonitory discipline**.”

- 24** to guard thee from the Woman of Evil;
from the flattery of an alien tongue.

24 To keep thee from
the evil woman, from
the flattery of the
tongue of a strange
woman.

Not the “*Alien Woman*” this time, but the “*Woman of Evil*,” as more directly significant of Impenitence. “**T**o guard thee, etc;” for of all other things in the universe, this is the province of Wisdom. If we are kept from the “*Woman of Evil*,” everything is saved. “**Flattery**.” That constitutes the risk. If Impenitence would tell the truth; or even if we

* “No evil shall happen to the righteous.”

would allow the truth, there would be no danger. But hers is an “**alien tongue**,” in this,—that though we deliberately admit it is a cheat, we accept its flattery. All life long we admit that we are piling wrath; and yet, “stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.” (9:17).

- 25 Lust not after her beauty in thy heart;
and let her not trap thee with her eyelids.
26 For after a woman selling herself as low as
for a loaf of bread,
and she a man’s wife,
a precious soul will hunt.

25 Lust not after her
beauty in thine heart ;
neither let her take
thee with her eyelids.

26 For by means of a
whorish woman a man
is brought to a piece
of bread ; and the
adulteress will hunt for
the precious life.

This is one of the fiercest sermons in the language. Nothing is so bewitching as womanly enchantment. Nothing *in esse*, when it is base, is so contemptible. Nothing sweeps a man with such a perfect storm of influence. Nothing leaves him so perfectly defrauded and unpaid. The Wise Man snatches at all this for the sharpest picture of Impenitence. “**Lust not after her beauty**;” for, poor as Impenitence is, she fascinates like some witching harlot. “**Her eyelids** ;” i. e., that strange glamour by which a man will lose his soul, even though he says life is unsatisfying. V. 26, “**For after a woman selling herself for a loaf of bread, and she a man’s wife**” (*at that*) ; for objects (compared with heaven) utterly disgusting; for labor! (our life is that!) for suffering! (we are born to suffer!) for wealth, which we ourselves admit belongs to ANOTHER, and will be exacted of us in eternal judgment, “**a precious soul will hunt**.” *Lay wait*, is the original expression. An immortal spirit, hovering about some den of infamy, is the picture that the Wise Man chooses for the impenitent sinner under the charm of his squalid enchantress. This translation (v. 26) is all original; but I see no necessity for labored proofs, as the mere propounding of it carries all the evidence. It gets over the difficulties that others have endured; and, with the only perfect meaning, passes over the ground smoothly with the Hebrew. The genders are all in place, and the language itself is almost in the order of our English.

Now he follows with consequences:—

- 27 Can a man shovel fire into his bosom,
and his clothes not be burnt?
- 28 Can a man walk on coals,
and his feet not have the deep brand?
- 29 So shall he be who goes in to his neighbor's wife.
Whoso touches her shall not go unpunished.
- 30 Men do not turn adrift a thief because he steals
• to fill his appetite because he is hungry;
- 31 but caught, he must pay sevenfold;
he must give all the substance of his house.
- 32 The adulterous debaucher of a woman is
absolutely senseless.
He who would destroy himself, is the man
to do just that thing.
- 33 A wound and dishonor does he get;
and his reproach is not wiped away.
- 34 For jealousy is the rage of a man;
and he shall not spare in the day of vengeance.
- 35 He shall not show favor for any ransom;
and he shall not yield because thou swell
up the bribe.

27 Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt?

28 Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt?

29 So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife, whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent.

30 Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry:

31 But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house.

32 But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.

33 A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away.

34 For jealousy is the rage of a man; therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.

35 He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts.

"Shovel." The word is a special one, and means to *take up* (as fire). **"Fire,"** is a favorite emblem for wickedness. "Wickedness burneth as the fire" (Is. 9:18: see also Is. 65:5). The (1) *pain*, the (2) *waste*, the (3) *growth*, and (4) the *small beginnings* of sin are all instanced in the "fire." **"Bosom."** Here is just where sin is taken. **"Walk."** Sin is not only the inward but the outward enemy; not only the "coals" in our "bosom," but the "*coals*" (or fierce-tempting occasions) in the midst of which we walk. **"Have the deep brand;"** literally, *be bored*, i. e., *be scorched deep*. Is it possible that we can worship God's creation, and He not be jealous? Can we be a nuisance in the universe, and not be cast out of it as a festering evil? The extreme picture (v. 26) of "*a precious soul*" hunting for such wretched objects, kindles us now for still further paintings; in which, as before, (see notes vs. 24, 25 also Introd. § 6), the lights of the more spiritual meaning seem continually

to be breaking through. Adultery is a most senseless infatuation; but it is only the *tendency* of the crime that can fulfil all this language.—“**All** (*a man's*) **substance**” always is not the forfeit. *Destroying one's self* is not its prerogative beyond any other criminality. Its “reproach” may sometimes be “wiped away.” Its victim may sometimes take a “bribe.” He may sometimes “spare in the day of vengeance.” He has been known to “show favor for a ransom.” And, therefore, in the sharp-cut averments of the texts, the horrible insanities of adultery are, indeed, sufficiently warned against; but the full fulfilment of the whole is in the madness of Impenitence. V. 30, “**Men do not turn adrift a thief.**” The glaring wickedness of unbelief is brought out signally by this. A theft may have some semblance of necessity. But a debauch, and, passing on from that, our unbelief, is utterly unpaid. It takes all our substance. A man goes into the eternal world worse off for all that he has possessed. It parts in endless ages with none of its disgrace. The Jealous Husband, whose creatures we have defiled, will take no ransom. “**He shall not spare in the day of vengeance.**” Our wild debauch is “**absolutely senseless.**” And our maddened Master will not be pleased in whatever conceivable form we may attempt to “swell up the bribe.” V. 30, “**Do not turn adrift,**” i. e., do not *undervalue*; do not, on account of the force of the temptation, *overlook*. The meaning is,—they punish even him. How much more the senseless mischief of a dishonor! And how much more still the senseless mischief of Impenitence! If a man be desperately taxed, who has stolen under the horrors of starvation, how for those deadly crimes by which a man refuses to arrest his sins; and, after the most deliberate confession, continues his soul in the contagion and the mischief of his wickedness?

CHAPTER VII.

I My son, watch my words, and thou shalt store my commandments with thee.	My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee.
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This is not common-place repetition. Here is a fresh statement of a strong doctrine. A man may save himself at a stroke.

(of course *Deo adjuvante*). He may shape himself for eternity in a moment. One act of thought may "store" the commandments for a lifetime (see 16 : 20). Nay, each fresh watching of God's "words;" each new care to keep his precepts, is followed immediately by this which the text defines,—that those words are stored in the Christian better, then and after. I look out for the present, and God looks out for my future; even in this matter of love and obedience. "Store;" literally "hide" (E. V.).

- 2** Guard my commandments and live; |
and my directions as the apple of thine eyes. |
2 Keep my commandments, and live;
and my law as the apple of thine eye.

"Guard and live;" that is, *guard, and thou shalt live*. These imperatives, like Is. 6 : 9, are the strongest sorts of asseveration. "**As the apple of thine eye.**" "**Directions**" here is singular; the usual English "*law*" (E. V.) We make it plural as meeter to our idiom; and it is *the apple of our eye* as the one thing needful. If holiness is the beginning even of the ways of God (8 : 22), surely no man need care for anything besides. "*Apple*;" literally, "*little man*," or "*pupil*" of the eye.

- 3** Bind them upon thy fingers; |
write them upon the tablet of thine heart. |
3 Bind them upon
thy fingers, write them
upon the table of thine
heart.

"**Upon thy fingers;**" so that they may guide all thy smallest actions, like thy signet ring, (if the mind chooses so to fill out the figure), since the signet ring is the symbol of execution (see Hag. 2 : 23). "**The tablet of thy heart;**" so that they may mould all its central influences (4 : 21-23).

- 4** Say unto Wisdom,—Thou art my sister; |
and call Discernment a well-known friend; |
4 Say unto wisdom,
Thou art my sister,
and call understanding
thy kinswoman:

—so as to receive the expulsive power of a grand affection. "He that doeth the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother" (Matt. 12 : 50). "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, etc." (Luke 14 : 26) Not "*kinswoman*"

(E. V.), but *one familiary known*, from the common word meaning *to know*.

Thus, as noted, 6 : 20-23, the Wise Man prepares for another twin picture of the Strange Woman. This is now to begin. It is more detailed than any before; more like a harlot; and less like anything abstract; and it gives room for the remark, that there was, doubtless, reason that piety should be abstractly given, as a picture under the name of Wisdom; and that the opposite should be concretely sketched. There is philosophy in this. Holiness is positive. Sin is negative. The one is to love God, and also our neighbour. The other is not to love God, or our neighbor. The one shows itself in a positive love; in a positive delight in the abstract holiness; *the other not in a delight in the opposite, viz., in an abstract sin*, but a delight in women; a delight in money; a delight in praise; a delight in everything, except moral purity; and, therefore, a delight in things that are innocent, when in limits; and that are only guilty, when the soul is let in upon them without curb of superior affection. If a man calls Wisdom his kinswoman, then he may love wine or love, without spiritual danger. That holiness, therefore, should be sketched in the abstract, and sinfulness in the guise of its best chosen illustration, is altogether in agreement with the fact; as the Christian is doting upon that which is to last forever, but the sinner, not upon its opposite; (for cases worse than his own he intrinsically loathes), but upon wine and other delights, which shall perish with the very frame of Nature.

5 to guard thee from the Strange Woman;
from an alien that makes smooth her words.

| 5 That they may
keep thee from the
strange woman, from
the stranger which
flattereth with her
words.

“**Strange;**” *strange*, indeed, if she alienate us from the very God that made her, and stir the jealousy of the very Being that gives us our power to love her (Hosea 2 : 8). “**Makes smooth, etc.**” That is the word for *flattery*. Flattery is the idea to be employed. Men can see through flattery. The blandishments of sin the impenitent himself thoroughly comprehends.

6 For in the window of my house,
at my lattice, I looked over,

| 6 For at the window
of my house I looked
through my casement,

This paints like art. The picturesqueness of the Hebrew causes us to imagine a lattice inclining from below outward, as on nunneries of our day; which a man may look over by leaning far out. The expression means *leaning over*, as God does (Ps. 14:2) when He looks down from Heaven. But this is unimportant.

What business has Solomon to be looking out? He tells us:—

7 and saw among the simple ones—
I distinguished among the sons—
a young man destitute of sense.

| 7 And beheld among
the simple ones, I dis-
cerned among the
youths, a young man
void of understanding,

The conjunction often denotes purpose or object; that he might mark the traits of the libertine; or, still more, of the lost man; in that graphic way which he is preparing thus to unfold to us. The word “**I distinguished**” has no conjunction before it. As a future without the conjunction it still more suggests the end or aim. “*That I might see, etc.*,” it would be no great violence to make it read.

In the first place he found a man that tampered with temptation:—

8 Going by in the back street near her corner,
he will also saunter in the way to her house;

| 8 Passing through
the street near her cor-
ner; and he went the
way to her house,

“**Back street** ;” literally, “*cleft* ;”—interval in a block of houses for a court to go through. “**Her corner** ;” the one she most frequented, and that she could see so as to come out. “**Saunter** ;” just the gait for an irresolute victim. The first *coup d'œil* shows that he will go nearer and nearer.

9 in the cool; in the evening of the day;
in the very bosom of the night and deep
darkness.

| 9 In the twilight, in
the evening, in the
black and dark night;

A most artistic poet! “**In the cool** ;” literally, “*breathe* ;” as

the evening breeze came up from the Levant. He began his sauntering then; and night slowly closed. It is all in a narrow text; from the evening breeze to the very eyeball of the night. "**Evening**," a word derived from *interweaving* and thus *thickening* (6 : 1). So we might translate,—"*In the cool—in the dusking of the day*," on to "**the very bosom of the night and deep darkness**." "**Bosom**" is literally *apple*, i. e., *pupil* or *eyeball* of the night. The second trait of Impenitence, therefore, is that it "deepens with the darkness. Moreover, it "loves darkness rather than light" (Jo. 3 : 19). The woman said, her husband was not coming home till the full moon (v. 20). Unless the moon rose later in the night, it would be a long time, therefore, before he came.

- 10 And behold a woman to meet him !
exposed as a harlot, but hidden in heart.

10 And, behold, there
met him a woman *with*
the attire of an harlot,
and subtle of heart.

Naked in person, but anything but that in her cunning wiles. Impenitence spreads all her baits, but keeps back all her perils. This is her third attribute.

- 11 She is loud and reckless.
Her feet abide not in her house.
12 Now is she in the street; now in the
broad squares;
and she lies in wait at every corner.

11 (*She is* loud and
stubborn; *her feet*
abide not in her house;
12 Now *is she* with-
out, now in the streets,
and lieth in wait at
every corner.)

"**She is loud.**" This is her fourth characteristic. It is mentioned chap. 9 : 13. The word means to *hum*, or to make a bustle. That is the very sound of the Hebrew. She never thinks. The world clamors so about men, that they are quieted along, as bees are settled down by the din of the struck metal. "**Her feet abide not in her house.**" We do not believe men would be more converted in a monastery; but that would show another class of temptations. The Proverb is speaking now of bustle; and undoubtedly the soul learns to make a vast temptation of its restlessness. V. 12. "**Now is she in the street.**" If she would stay in certain quarters, Impenitence would have less sway. She seeks victims everywhere. She has more preachers than Christ; and more churches than

all his people. She has absolute versatility of craft. She lets go no corner of the city. She is horribly *ungoverned*, as the word is; “reckless;” and pushes everywhere. This is her fifth trait.

- 13 And she caught him, and kissed him.
She put on a bold face and said to him:—
14 Peace offerings are upon me.
This day I have paid my vows.
15 Therefore went I out to meet thee;
diligently to seek thy face and find thee.
16 I have spread my couch with coverings
striped with the yarn of Egypt.
17 I have sprinkled my bed
with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.
18 Come, let us drink deep of love until the
morning.

Let us entrance ourselves with amorous
delights.

13 She caught him,
and kissed him, and
with an impudent face
said unto him,

14 / have peace-of-
ferings with me; this
day have I paid my
vows;

15 Therefore came I
forth to meet thee, dil-
igently to seek thy face;
and I have found thee.

16 I have decked my
bed with coverings of
tapestry, with carved
works, with fine linen
of Egypt.

17 I have perfumed
my bed with myrrh,
aloes, and cinnamon.

18 Come, let us take
our fill of love until the
morning; let us solace
ourselves with loves.

This is the sixth trait of the soul’s impenitence:—its perfect whirlwind of promises. V. 13. “**Bold face.**” Literally, “*she strengthened her face.*” She had to do that toward men, secretly knowing that she was deceiving them. The union of boldness and modesty in impenitent arts is strangely skilful. V. 14. “**Peace offerings are upon me.**” See Lev. 3:1, 3, 6, 9. In those old days a man vowed a *peace-offering*, which had to be some choice beast, and had to feast upon a part of it, and to get through with feasting by the third day. It encouraged great and wasteful feasts. She says, “*upon me*,” meaning, *I am bound for one*. And she speaks of “*vows*,” and uses the perfect tense to show how certainly the feast must come off. There might be room for another surmise, Lev. 15:29; but I think such sacrifices are never called “*peace-offerings*.” V. 15. “**Therefore;**” because of so grand a feast. V. 16. “**I have spread, etc.;**” just a whirl of impenitent delights. “**Striped;**” literally, *whipped*, to represent the *welts* that followed the lash. Our English, *stripes*, either gives or takes this derivation. “**Egypt;**” where to this day such splendid colors are disentombed. V. 18. “**Come;**” not, “let us *take*” (E. V.); for it is well, out of

regard to other figures (5:15; 7:18) to preserve the literal signification; “*let us drink*.” The last expression, literally given, is, “*Let us cause ourselves to exult in loves*;” as “the wing of the ostrich *exults*” (Job 39:13). As the lust of harlotry, though vile in itself, is nevertheless kindled by a perfect tempest of desire, so let no one dream is not impenitency. “Mighty men, when polluted, she has hurled down, and strong men were all her slain.” (7:26.) Now, seventh, come her quietings of alarm:—

19 For there is no husband at home.
He is gone a long way.

¹⁹ For the goodman
is not at home, he is
gone a long journey;

We translate so, rather than as in the English version, not arbitrarily, because it is more graphic, but because thus are the skilful touches of the Hebrew; not, “*the good man (husband) is not at home*” (E. V.); but literally, “**there is no husband at his home.**” The distinction is a trifle, but it punctures more pointedly the sense. “*There is no husband.*” That is the grand point. And with the sinner, “*there is no God.*”

And so in the next verse. We see cause to preserve the very shade of meaning:—

20 Quite a bundle of the money he took in
his hand.
The day the moon fulls he will come home
again.

²⁰ He hath taken a
bag of money with him,
and will come home at
the day appointed.

Our version says, “*He has taken a bag of money.*” We prefer the Hebrew; **a bundle of the money.** That is, he has gone to the family money, and bound up quite a bundle of it, to correspond to the “*long way.*” She gives her victim both a long time, and a precise term. And so the impenitent. God is to be a long time away; and they have very precise designs as to their future repentance.

21 By her very taking way she bent him.
By the flattery of her lips she drives him
along,

²¹ With her much
fair speech she caused
him to yield, with the
flattery of her lips she
forced him.

Literally, by her *much taking* The English has it, “*with her*

much fair speech." We read it, "by her very taking way." In the fifth verse of the whole book the English makes it "*learning*," because that is a thing *taken*. Some, therefore, say here,— "*by her much learning*," i. e., "*by her great skill*." But the other is more faithful, and certainly more expressive. The whole text implies that the sinner is not lost without resistance. "**Bent**" (preterite) she "*bent him*" first. She "**drives**" him ever afterwards.

- 22 starting after her suddenly as an ox enters | 22 He goeth after her
to the slaughter,
and as a chain for the punishment of a | straightway, as an ox
fool; | goeth to the slaughter,
or as a fool to the cor-
rection of the stocks;

"**The ox.**" A butcher's yard would show the meaning of "**starting suddenly**." "By the flattery of her lips she drives him along." In every sort of way the ox may be coaxed, or in turn may be desperately beaten, and apparently to no purpose. But though he may stand, ox-like, like a rock, yet the experienced herdman knows that he will "*suddenly*" start in. This is his nature. One inch may cost a hurricane of blows; but at a dash, as the butcher expects, he will *suddenly* rush in to his doom. "**And as a chain.**" This has occasioned a world of comment. It seems all crooked. It ought to be, many would think, *as a fool to the punishment of a chain*. Some say, *as in chains to a fool's punishment*. But we take it as it stands, and suggest this sense.—From the ox to the bull-ring, as it is called, a chain passes; not to drag him in, but to hold what he gives. As he yields, he is wound in. Where it ends, he comes to his slaughter. The chain is the Strange Woman. It passes in with the ox. The picture, therefore, may be literal. As the ox starts suddenly to the slaughter, the chain follows in *to the punishment of the fool*. We may mark at least this trait as the eighth in order,—that sin itself, or, perhaps, more intimately still, his own heart, is the chain that drags the sinner, and binds him to his ruin, after it has entered with him.

- 23 till a dart strike through his liver; | 23 Till a dart strike
as a bird hastens to the net, | through his liver; as a
and knows not that he is in its very | bird hasteth to the
throat. | snare, and knoweth not
that it is for his life.

"Till a **dart** strike through his **liver**." Did the Orientals kill with a "*dart*," instead of like our butchers with the blow of a bludgeon? If they did, all is in order. They hardly pierced the "*liver*," however; and that word in its root means *heavy*, and may refer to the main vitals. We rarely suggest readings. But the Massorites, perhaps, misplaced this clause, and it should end a previous triplet. Then a full couplet would remain. "**Knows not that he is in its very throat.**" There can be no doubt as to this new interpretation. The old reads, "*and knoweth not that it is for his life*" (E. V.). Such are all the other comments. The word is שָׁׁלֵךְ, usually *soul* or *life*. The text as a whole, and the preposition thus very badly rendered, and the sense, as concerns the context, all discourage the rendering that either of these two words can supply. Never noticed by our translators, but plainly to be preferred for this text (see Heb. 2:5), and regularly put down in our Hebrew Lexicons, is a third meaning, viz., *maw* or *throat*: as where Isaiah says, "Sheol has enlarged her throat, and opened her mouth without measure" (Is. 5:14). Of course this is admirably suitable. As a great summing up as to adultery, and a greater still as to the poor impenitent, every word is in place. Let it be either victim, ruin steals unconsciously; "**as a bird hastens to the net, and knows not that he is in its very throat.**"

24 And now, ye children, hearken unto me; and attend to the speeches of my mouth.

24 Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth:

We thought at first that this might be the beginning of a new canto, reaching on through the next chapter. But at the end of that chapter (v. 32), there is a similar starting-place, which, plainly, on inspection, proves but a continuance of the address of Wisdom. What Solomon says here, Wisdom says there,— "**And now, ye children, hearken unto me.**" As that cannot be severed from the rest of Her address, to be as preface to the ninth chapter, neither therefore can this be, as preface to the eighth. That these titles, "*My son, etc.*" are at the beginning

of poetic divisions, must be accepted manifestly with some exceptions (see also 8:32).

- 25 Let not thy heart go aside into her ways; | 25 Let not thine
nor do thou stray into her paths. | heart decline to her
ways, go not astray in
her paths:

Cut off the beginnings of desire. The first trickling of the crevasse is the manageable, and, therefore, more culpable, period of the difficulty.

“For” (v. 26) the secret thought that one can saunter toward her house (v. 8), and at any time turn back, is cruelly met by most discouraging examples:—

- 26 For mighty men, when polluted, she has | 26 For she hath cast
hurled down; | down many wounded;
and strong men were all her slain. | yea, many strong men
have been slain by her.

“**Mighty.**” Sometimes “*many.*” All the expositors in this particular case translate it “*many.*” But the after word (2nd clause) is rarely translated otherwise than “**strong;**” and this present word more often refers to quantity or greatness than it does to number. The whole passage is the more impressive, if we consider it as warning against confidence in strength, and particularly grand, if we mark the second clause. The “*mighty,*” weak through **pollution**, i. e., with a stained fancy, she has found it easy to throw down; “**and strong men;**” are what? why, they are “*all her slain.*” She damns no weak people. All men are strong; and strong in a most substantial sense. All men are offered salvation. All men, saved, are princes (Rev. 1:6; 5:10); and they are offered the second place in God’s kingdom (Is. 61:7). All men are bone of Christ’s bone: all men are born with a birth-right to be kings and priests, if they choose to be, and brothers of Emmanuel. Just as we mourn when some great statesman succumbs to licentiousness or drink, so should we mourn when any of Christ’s race succumb to the glamour of Impenitence.

- 27 The ways to Sheol are at her house | 27 Her house is the
descending to the chambers of death. | way to hell, going down
to the chambers of
death.

“**Sheol.**” If we say “*hell*” (E. V.) we destroy the figure.

"Sheol" is a figure of hell. If we say *perdition* in many passages from Paul (Rom. 6 : 23) we destroy his figure. "Death" is his figure for *perdition*. It is best to say "Sheol"—*the place that asks*. This *rapacious world* is a figure of *the pit*; and why have a figure unless we retain it in its own impressiveness? "At her house." There is no preposition "*at* ;" but the word *house* (Hebraic) carries an adverbial significance (8 : 2). Bertheau, De Wette, Maurer, Zöckler, Umbreit and the English version, all make the "*house*" to be "**the ways**." But first, this mars the figure. Second, a "*house*" is not only a strange emblem for "*ways*," but a good centre or starting point or depot for them. But, third, and most striking of all, the same expression, strangely overlooked, is in the next chapter (v. 2), again quite sacrificed in most of the translations, and never brought by any of them into an even balance with this verse, for which, as between twin pictures, it suits best, and seems legitimately intended. "*The ways to Sheol are at her house*." In the wider significance of Impenitence, the way to Hell starts no where else. The court of this Woman's house is its starting-out station. And there is not a way to the eternal doom on which she does not herself dispatch the lost; nor has she any track that does not end in "**the chambers**" of ruin.

Watch next for the other instance (8 : 2):—

CHAPTER VIII.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Does not Wisdom call?
and Discernment give forth her voice?
2 At high points in the road
she stands; at home among the paths. | DOTH not wisdom
cry? and understand-
ing put forth her voice?
2 She standeth in the
top of high places, by
the way in the places
of the paths, |
|--|--|

We cannot promulge as doctrine, but we think the last day will show, that Wisdom plied every art; that what was "all things richly for profit" in the case of the believer, was something analogous in tendency in the instance of the sinner; that if the sinner thought that his lot defeated repentance, he was mistaken: or that, could he have fared otherwise, his chances would have been in all cases improved—all this was

largely error: moreover, that he will be held accountable at last for quite the opposite; and punished for a life singularly favored and frequently adapted as the very best to lead him to salvation. V. 2. “**At high points;**” i. e., so as to be seen and to be heard. “**At home among the paths.**” This is the twin picture to 7 : 27. Maurer understands a *cross-roads*, (literally, *a house of paths*). Umbreit thinks of a *chance house where roads fork*. Döderlein thinks of an *inn*. Our English version has it, “*in the places of the paths.*” De Wette thinks with Maurer. Bertheau and Zöckler say,—“*in the midst of the paths.*” And this last is very near the sense. בָּתַח (house) is sometimes (adverbially) *amid*: but even in such cases (Ex. 28 : 26) is a more intimate word than בְּצִירָב. It means “*at home among*.” Wisdom is represented as “*at home among the paths.*” Folly was represented as having the death-ways *at her home*. בִּתְהַבֵּת, in either instance, is adverbially parsed, and is without the particle. Wisdom is represented as haunting all human paths. Folly lives upon them, too. Wisdom does not claim them as her own. Folly does. Wisdom has but one path. And she haunts every other to turn men out of such diverse journeyings into the one great track of truth and holiness.

- 3 By the side of gates; at a city's mouth; | 3 She crieth at the
at the entrance of doors she utters her | gates, at the entry of
cry:— | the city, at the coming
in at the doors;

—Thereby intending (1) to reach the whole concourse of the lost, and (2) to make human life at these great rallying places of men, speak its own lessons, and utter the loudest warnings against the soul's impenitence.

- 4 To you, O men, I call; | 4 Unto you, O men,
and my voice is to the sons of man. | I call; and my voice is
to the sons of man.

The nouns in the two clauses are different. The Hebrew had more words for “men” than we have, (see Class. XLIX.) Everywhere and to everybody! The variety is significant! To high men and low men; to all classes of men. Such is the ministry of this Intelligence. Her address lasts through the chapter:—

5 Make subtlety really discerning. O ye simple ones; and ye stupid ones, give true discernment to the heart.

5 O ye simple, understand wisdom; and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.

This sentence recognizes the distinction between mere intellect, or that “**subtlety**” which guides men in the marts of business, and that wisdom which is spiritual, and which comes down from above. A man may be acutely shrewd, and yet be a fool, and that in the very highest sense. Nor is this a mere mystic sense. He must be a fool actually, and of the very plainest kind, who gives the whole labor of a life, for example, to increase his eternal agonies. The cry of Wisdom, therefore, to such men is, that they bring “**discernment**,” that is, genuine sense, into their native shrewdness. I, Wisdom, dwell in intellect, she says of herself in the twelfth verse; meaning, that she takes any intellect, whether of God or man, and makes a dwelling of it, i. e., inspires it, in all its subtlety, with genuine discernment. And then, out of this native force, blessed by the richness of heavenly understanding, she brings forth the most splendid results; as the twelfth verse expresses it,—“I find the knowledge of deep devices.” “**Make subtlety**,” therefore, “**really discerning**,” and you turn a keen worldly intellect into a heavenly and most prosperous discretion.

6 Hear, for I will speak obvious things; and what is opened by my lips shall be plain matters.

6 Hear, for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things.

Not only does the higher Wisdom utter high things, and, when making a dwelling-place of intellect, very high and prosperous devices, but, strange enough, very plain things also, just such as the worldly “**subtlety**” might be supposed entirely to understand. The shortness of life, the certainty of death, the value of the soul, the terrors of the pit, and the solemnities of the bar of God, only this higher wisdom intelligently comprehends. Intellect, that weighs the stars, seems covered with a haze before these plain ideas. The word translated “**obvious**,” is in the English Version “*excellent*,” and as a noun means *princes*, and as an adjective *prince-like*, in many passages; i. e., *generous*

and *noble*. But in this verse, and in contiguity with the ninth, both the first and second clauses do best with more primary meanings. “*Obvious*” is a faithful rendering, because the root means *in front of*, or *facing* an object; and “*plain*” (2d clause) is more primary than “*right*,” (E. V.), because the original meaning is *even* or *level*, and we are always entitled, if the sense prefers it, to a return to an original signification. The text, therefore, means that Wisdom makes plain things plainer, and spiritual things plain to him who listens to her teaching.

- 7 For my mouth even mutters truth; | 7 For my mouth shall
and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. | speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips.

“**For**,” (as a reason, now, why all things become plain) “**my mouth**,” (and, of course, the man’s mouth when Wisdom has made a dwelling-place of his intellect (v. 12)) “**even mutters truth**;” that is, will utter it as its native language; will even *murmur it out*. The word means originally *mutter*, and grew to mean *meditate* (Zöckler), because what a man meditates deeply, he mutters about. The meaning is, The mouth of Wisdom mutters about truth, it is so natural to her. It mixes with her very nature, and so with his nature that takes her in; so that his mouth will murmur truth, and wickedness is an abomination to (*his*) lips. The word “*mouth*” means *palate*, and is not unintentionally selected for an utterance that comes deep out of the heart. See Job. 31:30, “Neither have I suffered my mouth (*palate*) to sin by wishing a curse to his soul.”

Wisdom still advances on this idea:—

- 8 All the words of my mouth are in right-eousness. | 8 All the words of
There is nothing twisted or crooked in them. | my mouth are in right-eousness; there is
nothing froward or perverse in them.

“**Righteousness**,” primarily “*straightness*.” We were naturally tempted to put this meaning in. But the word is the most usual word for “*righteousness*,” and we dislike to dislocate it from its ordinary rendering. Still to a Hebrew eye the whole verse balances itself:—*All straight* (1st clause); **Nothing crooked** (2nd clause). In the sharpest intellect there is this

horrible distortion,—that in its impenitent state it judges one way, and travels another. It judges heaven to be everything, and yet labors for the earth. Now there is nothing like this in Wisdom. “**T**here is nothing crooked” in her utterances. On the other hand, however spiritual they may be,

- 9 They are all plain to him that can give a meaning,
and level to them that find knowledge. | 9 They *are* all plain
to him that understandeth, and right to them
that find knowledge.

Whatever intellect may be converted, wakes up with the most profound astonishment at the *plainness* of the things that are now for the first time revealed. “**P**lain;” i. e., *in front of, obvious*; the same idea as in another root (v. 6).

- 10 Take my discipline, and not silver;
and knowledge rather than choice gold;
11 for wisdom is better than pearls;
and all the things that can be desired are
not to be compared with it. | 10 Receive my in-
struction, and not sil-
ver; and knowledge
rather than choice gold.
11 For wisdom is bet-
ter than rubies; and
all the things that are
to be desired are not to
be compared to it.

First, because everything else without it is a curse, and with it is just what is needed; second, because it is necessary to all beings, and even to God Himself, as the spring of action; third, because it is glory and wealth in its very nature. These points all follow in their turn in this very chapter; the second in the succeeding Proverb:—

- 12 I, Wisdom, have made a dwelling of subtlety,
and find the knowledge of deep devices. | 12 I wisdom dwell
with prudence, and find
out knowledge of witty
inventions.

That is, this spiritual light, which the very first Proverb (1: 2, 3) says is holiness, takes possession of any *intellect*; *dwells in it*; nay, **makes a dwelling of** it; for holiness can dwell in nothing else; and that intellect, though it may be the very mind of God, is stirred up by nothing else to *do* all that is grand in its total history (vs. 22–30). Satan, with such splendid intellect, what is he but the universe’s insanest fool? He toils for worse wages than anybody in the whole creation. But could Wisdom get a lodging in that peerless intellect, what different

results! She gets a lodging in our earthly faculties, and turns us about from sowing to our death, to a splendid harvest of eternal favor.

13 The fear of Jehovah is the hatred of evil.
Pride and arrogance and the evil way
and an upturning mouth have I hated.

¹³ The fear of the
LORD is to hate evil;
pride and arrogance and
the evil way and the fro-
ward mouth do I hate.

“The fear of Jehovah” is holiness, and such fear is the beginning of Wisdom. It is stating this under a new aspect to declare, that “*the fear of Jehovah is the hatred of evil.*” An intellect suddenly inspired with a hatred of all evil, (1) evil in itself, (2) evil to those around us, and (3) evil in the man’s own nature, would not only be totally different from the mass, but would shape its action like the action of the blessed in heaven, with the most marvellous perfectness.

14 Counsel is mine, and something stable.
I am discernment. I have strength.

¹⁴ Counsel is mine,
and sound wisdom; I
am understanding; I
have strength.

“Counsel is mine.” This, in any human writing, would be thought tame, but here it stands out in glaring contrast with the opposite picture. What “counsel” has the impenitent man? As he sits in his chair, you can force him to admit that his whole life is a blunder! “Something stable;” the peculiar word already commented on (2:7). Wisdom’s life is a thing of system. It has an assured result. It is the card-building of the spirit. One card supports another. It builds out with a declared dependence to the very end. Without it, man stammers. There is nothing clear that he can propound. He is without “counsel.” Nay, he will distinctly own that the course he takes speeds to ruin.

15 By me kings reign,
and rulers decree righteousness.
16 By me princes rule, and nobles;
yea, all the judges of the earth.

¹⁵ By me kings reign,
and princes decree justice.
¹⁶ By me princes
rule and nobles, even all
the judges of the earth.

First, Wisdom does not mean Jesus Christ. It means simply holiness, or moral light. It is time that we take this ground plainly. There is too strong a disposition to make the Beast

(Rev. 13:1) mean the Papacy, and to make Babylon (Rev. 17:5) Rome, and to make the Seals, etc., (Rev. 5:1) certain historic periods. The Bible is much more likely to make concrete things mean abstract ones, as in the instance of the "Strange Woman."

When, therefore, the next verse says :—

17 I love them that love me ;
and those that seek me earnestly shall find
me. **17** I love them that
love me ; and those
that seek me early shall
find me.

it does not refer to any person at all, but to the personified Wisdom, and means that Wisdom increases with the use ; that the more we "**love**" her, the more we have of her to love. Wisdom being a mere quality, and, therefore, something that has no feeling, and cannot actually love, is said to love, very much as a father is said to hate (13:24; see also 13:5) when he spares his son, and does not discipline him. It is a terse expression for what is analogous in its effect to love, and loads its subject with uncommon favor. Jehovah loved Solomon (2 Sam. 12:24); i. e., He loaded him with good. Possibly He never loved him in a higher way. "They that hate me love death" (8:36); i. e., they behave as if they did. "**I love them that love me;**" that is, I treat them as though I loved them. I, Wisdom, who am but a personification, load a man with good. I do so,—in myself, who am the highest good,—and in the heaven I, Wisdom, win for him. I love him in the most generous sense. In his very act of love I love him ; and in his very zeal of wooing I turn to him in the Holy Ghost.

To return to the last texts (vs. 15, 16): "**By me kings reign**" does not mean that kings reign through Christ; but that kings are kings (Prov. 20:28) only as they are wise. Yet, secondly, it does not mean wise in a common sense, but wise in the sense of holiness. And, thirdly, it does not mean holiness as altogether distinct from virtue, but holiness as that moral right which belongs to all the ranks of moral intelligences. The virtue that belongs to God, and the virtue that belongs to Gabriel, and the virtue that remains in man, and the virtue that is wrecked in hell, are not all different qualities of moral right.

but are all identically the same. One moral quality inheres in all. Government being a moral work, the man that governs must have a moral heart. And as there are no two sorts of virtue, (I mean strictly in its essence), he is a king, i. e., he truly exercises his kingship just in proportion as he is moral, i. e., just in proportion as he is holy, i. e., in this language of this inspired book that is before us, just in proportion as he is spiritually wise. Of course the uses are different. Morality is of the lost, and holiness of the ransomed. But the moral quality is but one. And the Wise Man means to declare that without this moral conscience, a king cannot be a king, and that he cannot be a proper sort of king, except with that heightened conscience which is reborn and bettered in the true believer. Therefore it is said in the 14th verse, "**I have strength;**" not that Wisdom is the same as strength, but that effectively she commands it. We shall see in subsequent verses (vs. 22, 27, 30), that God could not build the universe without this holiness. And here, in these present texts, Wisdom *has strength* in this.—A king could not be a king without it. A **Prince** would be scouted from the throne if he had positively no virtue. A **Judge** would be routed from the bench, if he were throughout depraved. Not only does Wisdom give strength, by bringing it down to us from above, but it *has strength* in that we could not shape a plan unless we gave it the ligature of *some kind* of virtuous design.

Before he applies the same thoughts to God, he interjects the idea that Wisdom is precious on her own account. Not only are all the great things on earth done by her, but she is more glorious still outside of anything that she may avail to do:—

- 18** Riches and honor are with me ;
durable ease and righteousness.
- 19** My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine
gold ;
and my increase than choice silver.
- 20** In the way of righteousness I walk ;
in the midst of the paths of judgment.
- 21** So results a heritage to them that love me ;
and I fill full their treasures.

18 Riches and honour
are with me ; *yea*, dur-
able riches and right-
eousness.

19 My fruit *is* better
than gold, *yea*, than
fine gold ; and my rev-
enue than choice silver.

20 I lead in the way
of righteousness, in the
midst of the paths of
judgment ;

21 That I may cause
those that love me to
inherit substance ; and
I will fill their treasures

“Riches and honor.” “Riches” are very different from “honor.” “Riches” are much lower than “honor.” “Riches” are great personal treasure. “Honor” is an excellence *per se*, a blessedness in itself, even if it profited not, and gave us no pleasure at all. It is good to have been holy even if we were stricken from existence. “With me.” I suspect that the particle here had a meaning, particularly in the older Hebrew, that has too far fallen out. It would tend to erect the pronoun into the subject of the verb. We have not insisted thus in the translation; but approximately the meaning is, “Myself am riches and honor.” Of what nature the “riches” are is expressed:—“durable ease,” from a verb meaning to be *light* or *easy*; and then, as explanatory of all, “righteousness.” V. 19. “My fruit;” not so much *my benefits*, or the *good I do*; but, as is expressed in the last clause, “*my increase*,” or *my own growth as Wisdom*. The idea holds that Wisdom is herself the benefit. V. 20. To relieve the incredibleness of this, Wisdom represents how she is immersed in her own entertainments. She moves and has her being always in herself. “In the way of righteousness I walk; in the midst of the paths of judgment;” “so” in the midst, (she evidently implies) that she finds both end and business in the mere walk of the righteous. “So results;” literally, “there is.” The sentence strictly would read, “To make those that love me inherit (or have a heritage) there is (or there is enough).” It is awkward to change it into English. The meaning is, that Wisdom being riches and honor, there is enough in Wisdom’s self to make “a heritage” of for “them that love” her. In fact, our eternal heirdom will be this peerless Wisdom. Our English has it, “That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance.” The difficulty is that “there is” (וְיֵה) is never translated “substance,” and, in fact, need not be. The force lies in translating it “there is,” or “so results;” the meaning being, that “there is” enough in this quality of Wisdom, making it “riches and honor,” to erect it as a good, and so, beyond all rival, the highest good, as that “there is” enough in itself to make it a heritage for all its children. “Fills” (Pihel) sometimes means *makes full* (Job 8:21), but sometimes also “fill,” as being *oneself the filling* (1 Chr. 12:15).

- 22 Jehovah got possession of me as the first
of His way;
before His works of old.
- 23 I was anointed from everlasting; from the
beginning;
or ever the earth was.
- 22 The Lord pos-
sessed me in the begin-
ning of his way, before
his works of old.
23 I was set up from
everlasting, from the
beginning, or ever the
earth was.

"Got possession of me." Many modern commentators say, "*Created me.*" As old as Arius was a difficulty with those who thought Wisdom was Jesus Christ, and who were stumbled at the thought that He should be "*created.*" The word does mean "*created,*" but it means also (not "*possessed*" (E. V.) but) *acquired possession of*, which is the meaning in this place. "*Created*" would suit the philosophy which makes holiness nothing but the will of God. But for those who believe that it is as eternal as Himself, the sense, as given, is exactly appropriate. There never was a time when truth, and that spiritual truth which is the object of this spiritual Wisdom, was not at hand with God, ready to be perceived by Him, and actually being perceived, or *gotten possession of*, in its eternal fulness. The rest of the sentence, however, is much more important. Let us premise:—Wisdom is holiness. Holiness is two virtues. One is the love of the welfare of others. The other is the love of holiness itself. These two loves make up all there is of spiritual wisdom.* Now it is in this light that we can understand the expression, "*the first of His way.*" If holiness is God's highest trait; if, being His highest trait, it becomes, consequently, His controlling motive; if His controlling motive, therefore, is benevolence and a love to holiness, it follows that what moved Him on any path originally was these two prevailing loves, a love for the welfare and a love for the holiness of a possible universe, when it should have been created. If it were possible, accordingly, to conceive of Jehovah without holiness, it would be natural to conceive of Him also without a universe; for His only motive to create would seem to be, His eternal holiness, that is, His eternal longing for the happiness and holiness of exalted creatures. As Wisdom, therefore, is holiness (1: 2, 3), we understand her doctrine; "*Jehovah got possession*

* See Author's "*Metaphysics*," p. 286, and "*Theology*," p. 42.

of me as the first of His way." He did not set out on His travels till I inspired Him. He is my only original embodiment; and yet we are coeternal. He made me in the sense that He originated me in all other beings, but yet I was always with Him. I was a motive to Him in His earliest act; "*the first of His way before His works of old.*" Now, reviewing all this, and giving it its last touch of justness, let us remember, that there is no wisdom but in God (1 Tim. 1:17). Had He not been, there would be no such light; I mean reflected anywhere, or seen by any being. He originally conceived it (or "*got possession of it,*" as our sentence reads); a thing which He did not do in time, but from all eternity. But still He did not create it in the sense of making that wise which He found wise, or of making that holy which rules all His motives. He could not so have shaped it by His will as to have made profanity wise, or malice the eternal right. He did not create His own loveliness, or His own duty to love it. But He found these things eternal. He declared them as an eternal truth. He decreed them as an eternal norm, and He took them as the beginning of His way, and the moulding motive of His whole creation. V. 23, "**I was anointed;**" not Christ, but Wisdom. The verb is a difficult one, but "*anointed*" is the favorite translation. I was made king. I was made the sovereign motive, not only for man but God.

There remain now two ideas; the first, not only that holiness originated the universe, but shaped it afterwards, and framed all its Providences; and second, that she was not simply a norm and a rule, but herself a delight. She became herself a pleasure, and that not now to the Almighty, but as a created delight outside of Him and in the new-born universe. These are the ideas that finish the chapter:—

24 When there were no deeps I was brought forth;

when there were no fountains heavy with waters.

25 Before the mountains were sunk fast;
before the hills was I brought forth.

26 Even when He had not made the land or
the parts beyond
or the beginning of the dust of the world.

24 When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water.

25 Before the mountains were settled; before the hills was I brought forth:

26 While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.

- 27** When He set up the heavens I was there;
when He fixed a vault over the face of the deep;
- 28** when He strengthened the clouds above;
when He settled firmly the fountains of the deep;
- 29** when He gave the sea her decree,
that the waters should not run over her mouth;
when He decreed foundations for the earth.
- 30** And I became a builder at His side.
And I became a deep pleasure day by day;
a joy in His sight all the time;
- 31** a joy in the habitable part of His earth;
and my deep pleasures were for the sons of man.

27 When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth:

28 When he established the clouds above; when he strengthened the fountains of the deep.

29 When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth:

30 Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;

31 Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth: and my delights were with the sons of men.

"When there were no deeps I was brought forth." This had to be, because without wisdom nothing would have been created. Holiness, which is the same thing, was God's only motive. It had to be "*brought forth*" in Him, and this must have been an everlasting, like the design of a Son, or like the purpose of His kingdom, or He would have dwelt alone. The love of others' happiness, and the love of universal holiness, must have been present, or His creative power must have been but a sterile possession. V. 25, "**B**efore the mountains were **s**unk **f**ast;" as though like some mighty monuments they had to be sunken in their deep foundations into the soil. V. 26, "**O**r the parts beyond;" intentionally vague, no doubt. The "earth" was rather the "*land*," where the living dwelt. In its mighty plain, as it then appeared to them, what lay beyond, who could characterize? It is only globularly, as we know it, that we can dispose in thought of its exterior reaches. "**T**he beginning," i. e., the first atoms of that myriad dust that forms our planet, wherever it comes under our tread. V. 27, "**W**hen **H**e set up **t**he **h**eavens," which to an untutored eye would seem vaulted like the ceiling of a dome. "**W**hen **H**e fixed a vault, etc." Like the "rising" and the "setting" of the sun, it is no stain on inspiration when it shapes its speech intelligibly to the thought

of the people. V. 28, "When He strengthened the clouds above," which bred wonder among men as to how they could hold up such mighty irrigations. They imagined a "*firmament*" or *expans*e as the Scripture names it (Gen. 1 : 6), and imagined windows in its roof, through which the floods of waters could be poured down (Gen. 7 : 11). V. 29, "Run over her mouth." "Pass his commandment," the English Version has it. *His mouth* or *its mouth* either is grammatical. In the former understanding, God's "*commandment*" (E. V.) would be perfectly well chosen as the rendering. But the sentence would be less tautological, and more simple in its frame if we imagine with the ancients a great lip to the fountains of the deep, and God as giving a decree that the waters *are not to pass* over it. V. 30, "I became." "*I was*," our English translation has it. But the verb *to be* is not necessary in Hebrew; and when it does appear, it means more than *was* (Gen. 1 : 3). "**A builder.**" Now we must not forget that Wisdom is a mere quality. It is not even a power, or a function of a being. It is mere light. It is the high holiness of the Almighty. Yet as gravitation is a universal system, that shapes the whole universal frame, so holiness is the norm of the grand creation. God could not have built without it. The law that we are to have love to others, and that we are to have love to holiness, is the gravitation of all intelligences. Matter need not be created except for mind; and mind must not be created except for holiness; and, therefore, there is deep philosophy in Solomon in the words, "*I became a builder at His side.*" Mind would defy any plan except it were simply this:—that the whole banded life be framed together under the law of holiness,—that mutual regard between God and His works, which holds the moral elements of any conceivable creation at peace under a single system. "**Deep pleasures.**" God made conscious happinesses outside of Himself, and Wisdom claims to be *facile princeps*. "**I became a pleasure.**" The largest happiness of which men are capable, is holiness; and the only happiness is one in which holiness, and that in a perfect degree, is found to be embodied. She is, therefore, "**a joy in (God's) sight;**" and as there is no conceivable felicity without, she is a joy "**all the time.**" Not, indeed, for beasts; for they can be

happy without; not, indeed, for God, for He is happy of Himself. I know not that it is reverent to imagine that the practice of holiness is that which adds bliss to His exalted nature. But for man, Wisdom is the grand delight. And, therefore, we can understand the close:—V. 31, “**A joy in the habitable part of His earth; and my deep pleasures were for the sons of man.**” Not as with the English Version, that Wisdom herself rejoices, and has delight; for that she cannot have, except in the person of her votaries; nor that God delights in her; for that is neither new nor pertinent; but that she came to be outside of Him the great moral joy. She not only served as the only norm for a creation, but as the grand joy of it; for, as offered in the glories of the Divinity, she will be the feast of Heaven through all the ages of its Intelligence.

32 Now, therefore, hearken unto me, O ye sons;

and blessed are they that watch my ways.

33 Hearken to discipline, and be wise; and do not ye let go.

34 Blessed is the man who hearkens unto me, so as to lurk at my gates day after day; so as to watch at the posts of my doors;

35 for he that finds me has found me life, and is bringing out favor from Jehovah.

36 But he that misses me, wrongs himself. All that hate me, have fallen in love with death.

³² Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways.

³³ Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not.

³⁴ Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.

³⁵ For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD.

³⁶ But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.

“Now, therefore, etc.:” the same concluding formulary as in the former chapter, though Wisdom, not Solomon, is now the speaker. “**Watch**,” not “*keep*” (E. V.). *Keep* comes from old Saxon (like *capio*) meaning *take*; which grew to mean *holding fast*, or *treasuring away*. “*Keeping God’s commandments*” has grown to mean doing them; and has introduced an English idiom. But the inspired word is *guard*, or *watch*.* It is derived from *bristling* like the spear-heads of a garrison. To “*keep*” (E. V.) God’s commandments, in what has grown to be

* There is another word often translated *keep* which means *watch* also,—primarily, to look narrowly at.

the English idiom, no doubt through mistranslation, means to *mount guard* over them, so as to watch them. And the ways of Wisdom are offered for our "*watch*" so that we may look hard at them, and keep our feet in them diligently and all the time. V. 33. "**Do not let go.**" There is no accusative here. Wisdom must be held hard to. There must be *no letting go*. The sluggard is one that knows enough, as we all do, but cannot be persuaded to hold on with the requisite exertion. V. 34. "**So as to lurk;**" the lamedh (ב) of *consequence*. Zöckler considers this as answered to by the present participle; in which he is mistaken; for it is one of the deepnesses of this philosophic book that it remembers that our present act is the only thing within our power. "**Hearkens so as to lurk.**" We are to do the present thing, and then we will form the habit. "*Blessed is the man who hearkens unto me so as to lurk at my gates day after day; so as to watch at the posts of my doors.*" Uriah watched at David's gate as a token of service (2 Sam. 11:9). Lazarus watched at Dives' gate as a token of dependence (Luke 16:20); courtiers at royal entrances for smiles of favor. Let the sinner do all these things. As the height of wisdom let him get wisdom, and by means of all his gettings let him get discernment. V. 34. "**Has found me, etc.;**" a plain pronominal suffix disturbed somewhat by various readings. Wisdom is herself the life. No one can find her to be life till he has found her, and has her in possession. "**Is bringing out;**" the same play of tenses. "*Found*" is in the perfect, as we find Wisdom once for all. "*Is bringing out*" is in the future, to show that Wisdom, once found, is *bringing out favor* all the time. V. 35. "**He that misses me.**" The word *sin* in the Bible has fixed itself upon this same root. "*He that sinneth against me*" (E. V.). Still the word "*miss*" is the primary, and, in this case, the more expressive meaning. The mere missing is a cruel suicide. The lost miss Wisdom eternally. "Death and hell say, we have but heard the fame of it with our ears." Doing without is a stupid misery; but hating it is an insane marvel. "**All that hate me have fallen in love with death.**"

CHAPTER IX.

- 1 Wisdom has builded her house.
She has hewed out her seven pillars.

Wisdom hath build-
ed her house; she hath
hewn out her seven
pillars;

“Wisdom ;” the plural, as in chap. 1 : 20. **“House,”** among the Hebrews, was an image of all well being (Ex. 1 : 21). It would be foolish, therefore, to attempt limiting its sense. It means shelter. It means nurture. It means repose. It means the centre of all provision. It means the home of all convivial feasts. If Wisdom has built such a shelter for the lost, it means that she has furnished for them every possible necessity. An Eastern house depended upon columns that were around a court. Samson put his hand upon such interior supports. If Wisdom **“has hewed out her seven pillars,”** it means that the provision she has made for the saints is absolutely secure. The very number **“seven”** betokens a perfect because a sacred support. And we have but to ask upon what the gospel rests in its eternal promises and in the atonement by its Great Head, to settle the question as to these sacred pillars.

- 2 She has killed her killing.
She has mingled her wine.
She has also spread her table.
3 She has sent forth her maidens.
She calls on the tops of the high places of
the city :—

2 She hath killed her
beasts; she hath mingled
her wine; she hath
also furnished her
table;
3 She hath sent forth
her maidens; she crieth
upon the highest places
of the city,

“She has killed her killing,” viz., Christ. **“She has mingled her wine,”** viz., His atoning blood. She has, in every respect, a banquet; just as the Strange Woman offered her banquet. **“She has also spread her table.”** Christ and his cross not being efficient unless administered to men, she has established churches and ordinances as the mere dishes and seats of the expected banquet. V. 3. **“She has sent forth her maidens ;”** viz., sermons and Providential strokes, the whole heraldry of the doctrine of salvation.

- 4 Whoso is simple let him turn this way.
As for him that lacks sense, she says to him :—
- 5 Come eat of my food,
and drink of the wine that I have mingled.
- 6 Forsake the simple and live;
and go straight in the way of discernment.
- 4 Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,
- 5 Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.
- 6 Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.

First, the call balances in chief respects that uttered by the Strange Woman. Second, the invitation drops much that is not chief, and offers simply the “**food**” and the “**wine**.” The appeal goes to the heart of the gospel dispensation. And, thirdly, as the hope of all these appeals, they are exceeding plain. The “**simple**” in their own devious paths, are still **going straight** in their own imagination (Prov. 14:12). The wise voice implies (v. 6) that in their own innermost convictions, nevertheless, they know they are going crooked. There is a strange mixture in these respects. “They flatter themselves in their own eyes” (Ps. 36:2), and yet their own hearts condemn them (1 Jo. 3:20), and so Wisdom boldly appeals to this last conviction:—“**Forsake the simple, and live; and go straight in the way of discernment.**” Wisdom, though enthroned over the universe, is yet so plain, that it only requires that men “*go straight in*” what they see to be their duty.

Yet under the very brow of this plainness, she goes on (v. 7) to one of the deepest doctrines of religion. There is no truth more profound with the chieftest of the apostles. Though Wisdom asks nothing but that a man may follow his conscience, yet, in asking that, without grace, she will only harden him:—

- 7 He that disciplines a scorner brings down upon him shame;
and he that reproves a wicked man his disgrace.
- 7 He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame; and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot.

This turn of the pronoun, no one seems to have discovered. The English version says, “*to himself*,” though all the passage (vs. 8, 9) is telling the consequences to the poor hardened man. The doctrine is, “**He that disciplines a scorner**” just adds to him shame. And the philosophy amounts to this:

Man is not like a thermometer, raised or sunken by every breath, but he is the subject of a change which makes a difference in moral influences. Without that change, instruction hardens him. With that change, it moves him and makes him better. Without the change the thermometer is always sinking. With the change, it is rising all the time. This teaching is had in all forms in the New Testament. John says (1 Jo. 2 : 12), "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you;" his plain implication being, that they "walk in darkness, because that darkness hath blinded (their) eyes" (v. 11), and that it would be useless to write except for the grace of forgiveness. We hear of "the letter [that] killeth" (2 Cor. 3 : 6); and Christ tells (Jo. 15 : 24) that "if (he) had not come among them and done the works that none other man did, they had not had sin," meaning, comparatively. This passage, therefore, teaches that, "*He that disciplines a scorner, brings upon him (more) shame,*" and that, "*he that reproves a wicked man*" just deepens upon him his *spot*, or "*his disgrace.*" We are to do good unto "*all men*" (Gal. 6 : 10), but, in view of these impossibilities of benefit to the reckless, we are especially instructed to do good "to them that are of the household of faith."

8 Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee.
Reprove a wise man, and he will love thee.

8 Reprove not a
scorner, lest he hate
thee: rebuke a wise
man, and he will love
thee.

By which I do not understand that we are forbidden to preach to the impenitent; but that we are to contemplate two facts:—first, that unless they are changed, our preaching will make them worse; and, therefore, second, that, though our preaching is a chosen instrument of the change itself, yet, if they are "*scorners*," i. e., if they are what our Saviour calls "*swine*" (Matt. 7 : 6); and he means by that, specially incorrigible; we are not to scatter our "*pearls*" to them. We are not to intrude religion upon scoffers. We are to withhold the good seed to some extent, (yet with infinite compassion for all,) for what may more reasonably be hoped to be, or, at least, to come to be, the good and honest ground (Mar. 4 : 8).

- 9 Impart to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser.
 Teach a righteous man, and he will make still higher acquisitions.
- 9 Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.

“**Impart;**” literally *give*. A very good plan, to make it indefinite. *Give*; and the idea is, that it makes no difference what you give. *Everything* will bless the “**wise man.**” “**Teach**” him anything. It will mould into more generous “**acquisitions.**” Everything hurts the wicked. “The wicked is thrust down even by his troubles” (Prov. 14:32), but the righteous is helped up by everything.

And now the whole is explained at a stroke:—

- 10 The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom;
 and the knowledge of holy things is discernment.
- 10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding.

Men can not begin to be wise except in holiness. The woman (6:13) is said “*to know nothing at all.*” The impenitent man discerns not a ray of wisdom. And, therefore, “*Reprove not a scorner,*” because he can not begin to listen without “**wisdom.**” Unless it begins to be the fact that God is teaching him, you can not teach him. “**The fear of Jehovah**,” or holiness, or faith, or a change of heart, just as you please to call it, “**is the beginning of wisdom;**” and that word is not **ירשא**, which means, also, *chief* or *principal thing*, but a word purely for a “beginning.” Do not preach to the insane, unless there be a reasonable sign that they may begin to be enlightened. That light must be a moral change. “*The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of holy things;*” that is, not of The Holies, viz., of God (pluralis excellentiae) (Bertheau et al.); not of *holy men*; though it is the masculine plural; not of “*holy things*” to the exclusion of persons; but more expressively still of each and all of these; the knowledge of *the holy* (plural) in whatsoever of God or creature it may have an example or be made to appear, “**is discernment.**”

- 11 For by me thy days shall become great; and they shall make thee greater through years of life.
- 11 For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased.

Not "*be multiplied*" (E. V.), as we have already explained (3 : 2). The days of a good man are not necessarily multiplied, but sometimes the reverse. The verb means to "**become great**" oftener than it means to be *multiplied*. Moreover, "**years of life**" is feminine, and the verb **shall make**, etc., is masculine. And, most important of all, this verb is active, and does not mean "*shall be increased*" (E. V.). The resort, too, that men have had to making it impersonal, so as to read, "*men shall add*," meaning "*there shall be added*," all shows, that there is something unnatural in the usual arrangement. The sense above given is infinitely better. "**If thou art wise thou art wise for thyself.**" The naked fact of being wise shall make thy days great. All life will "**make thee greater**." It is not a promise that thy days shall be long, but that the longest of thy days shall only minister to thy soul's greatness. "**Through years of life;**" a frequent meaning of the accusative.

Wisdom is a thing that is above all life and treasure. It is one's own, that he must possess inalienably:—

- 12 If thou art wise, thou art wise for thyself; and if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.

12 If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.

"**Scornest.**" As we are not aware that the mass of the impenitent actually scoff at religion, we must look at this word, so often selected by Solomon, as meaning that practical scorn, by which men, who profess to respect the gospel, show it the practical contempt of their worldliness.

- 13 The Woman of Folly is clamorous.
She is simple, and knows nothing whatever.

13 A foolish woman is clamorous; she is simple, and knoweth nothing.

The commentators, who, through all the previous instances, stood out against the idea that the "**Strange Woman**" was the impersonation of Folly, seem to yield to it in the present instance: the pictures of Wisdom and Folly stand so nicely balanced. The Fathers seized all as allegories. And the adoption of what is tropical in one, seems greatly to sustain all the parabolic interpretations. "**The Woman of Folly.**" The ex-

pression, it is true, in this instance, comes nearer a mere name for Impenitence. “**Clamorous**,” that is, so bustling as to allow no time for repentance (see 5:6); like Cardinal Mazarin, of whom it was said, that the devil never would let him rest. The sinner is so hurried along in the changes of life, as apparently to unsettle any attempted reformation. “**Knows nothing whatever**,” an expression grandly doctrinal. The impenitent is blankly dark. Ecclesiastes (6:5) represents the perishing as like an untimely birth. “He hath not seen the sun, nor known anything.” “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). “Where can Wisdom be found?” says the inspired man (Job. 28:14, 22). “The depth saith, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not with me.” The “Woman of Folly” is blankly ignorant; for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom, and if she have not the beginning, then mental light, if she have any, must be but as “darkness” (Matt. 6:23).

14 And she sits at the door of her house
on a seat in the high places of the city,

14 For she sitteth at
the door of her house,
on a seat in the high
places of the city,

15 to call those who are passing on the way,
who are attempting straight paths;—

15 To call passengers
who go right on their
ways:

“**She sits, etc.**:” the same publicity and thoroughness as in the other pictures. “Wisdom” and the “Strange Woman” are kept poetically balanced in the modes and appliances of their diverse solicitations. “**Passing on the way.**” All men are on a way. At no given hour is any man not on some way in a conscious journey. “**Attempting straight paths.**” This is a fine stroke! All the crowd whom she addresses think they are going right in some shape. Confessedly, they are all wrong. But, at the moment, they seem right; doing correct business; or providing necessary means; or living the usual life! So that, literally, the Strange Woman seems to be calling to men, “**attempting straight paths.**”

16 Whoso is simple let him turn in hither,
yea, he who lacks sense. And she says to
him:—

16 Whoso is simple,
let him turn in hither:
and as for him that
wanteth understanding,
she saith to him,

- 17 Stolen waters are sweet;
and food in secret is pleasant.
18 And he knoweth not that the shades are
there;
and that her guests are in the depths of
Sheol.

17 Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten
in secret is pleasant.
18 But he knoweth
not that the dead are
there; and that her
guests are in the
depths of hell.

"Whoso is simple." She can have no other audience. It does not mean that she parades their simplicity, though really they all confess it; but that such is the interior solicitation of Impenitence. It is a solicitation only to the simple. "**Yea, he who lacks sense;**" literally, *heart*; for just as we need not reprove a scorner (Prov. 9:8) because it will only harden him, so Folly need not assail the wise. It will only quicken them. Folly is so gross that it is only the insane that could be brought to listen to her. V. 17, "**Stolen waters are sweet**" Such are all the sweetesses of the Impenitent, viz., "*stolen*." This is a common thought on the lips of our Saviour. All life is stolen by an impenitent sinner. He has no right to it. It is "*another man's*" (Luke 16:12). It is the "*Mammon of unrighteousness*" (Lu. 16:9). It is that a man robs God (Mal. 3:8). It is only the believer that can look upon life as a gift (Eccles. 5:18, 19). A sinner always feels like a hound secreting some stolen dainty. It is "**food in secret.**" And it is the witching sweetness of his desires, that leads the sinner to close his lips upon them without asking the Almighty. V. 18, "**The shades;**" that is, the dead; an old Pagan phraseology; an emblem of the damned; just as "**Sheol**" is of Gehenna or the pit. The damned are in her very train. Her house is the very **depth** of hell. There is nothing blacker in hell than this "*Woman of Folly*;" and in this very world, therefore, men are stung with the poisons of the pit. Of course "**he knows not.**" If the sinner only knew that he was already dead, he might wake up with a bound to the work of his salvation.

CHAPTER X.

I PROVERBS OF SOLOMON.

THE Proverbs of
Solomon.

This is the heading of fifteen chapters, ending with chap. 25. It marks the beginning of single couplets or texts, which, with more or less interconnection, are isolated Proverbs. We may expect a gain in terseness, with, perhaps, a loss in tenderness and poetic grace. Attempts are in all commentaries, almost, to group these Proverbs; Hitzig going so far as to infer numeric rules for the size of the divisions. But we think this fanciful. He has to resort to excision, which is his favorite fault. We have no doubt that there is great progress in the texts (see Introd. § 7), but it is easy and flowing like the changes of a landscape. The first Proverb, for example (10:1), finds a reason in most that follow. But when we critically begin to divide the groups, we weary the eye, and divert its glance from the natural and self-developing connections. In fact, there may be different connections, all legitimate, for different and differently situated interpreters of each particular inspiration.

Let a wise son make a glad father; and let a foolish son be the grief of his mother.

A wise son maketh a glad father; but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

The future, as we all know, may be either predictive or jussive. It may either be imperative or a proper future. Guardedly, I would like to think that it might be both; that is, as it lies out under the inspiration of the Spirit, who, of course, knows all its possible meanings, it need not be supposed to be constrained to either, if all have kindred sense. We would have no quarrel, therefore, with a man who said that this terse proverb meant both that piety would gladden a father, and that piety should gladden a father, when found in a son. Either and both are true, and for kindred reasons. As to the first, it applies to the Almighty, who values piety more in His

children than anything besides. As to the second, if we were obliged to choose, we would prefer it greatly to the other, because it has more sense. As the great opening Proverb in the list, to say that holiness is that which gladdens parents, is sometimes not true, and, in cases where it is true, viz., with good parents, is baldly obvious. We prefer, therefore, the view of the imperative. "**Let a wise son make a glad father.**" If a man has a good son, let it be his one all sufficient gratification. This is, *ad unguem*, a vital sense. Men toil for their children, and give themselves pain in their behalf to an extent altogether heroic, considering how they abnegate self; but to an extent altogether disproportioned, as between their temporal and eternal welfare. This is one way we destroy our children. If their temporal inheritance is threatened, we are all on thorns; but if they are doing well or doing ill in piety, we give it but little notice. The verb, therefore, as a jussive, means most. "**Let a foolish son be the grief of his mother;**" that is, an unconverted son. He may be all smiles and amiableness, and the father's business may be doing well, but if he is a fool, spiritually, it should be his mother's grief. The one great effort of parents should be to bring their children among the wise.

And now, reasons :—

- 2 Of no profit are treasures of wickedness ;** *z* **Treasures of wickedness profit nothing : but righteousness delivereth from death.**

Not "**treasures of wickedness**" in the sense of great amounts of it. Of course, that is unprofitable. Not *treasures gotten by wickedness* (Prov. 21:6). The sense is much more deep and catholic. The Proverb means the treasures of an unsaved man. Let a wise son make a glad father, for a rich son, if it be but the wealth of an impenitent, is positively without profit. Do not strive for the worldly estate of your offspring; for if they be "*wise*," they shall have as much substance as is for their good; and if they are fools, no substance at all is better than the grandest inheritance, for, for this, they shall be forced to give account. Notice here, again, (as in 14:11), the balancing

of the Proverb. It does not say, “*Of no profit are treasures of wickedness,*” but the treasures of righteousness shall be made effectual to blessing. But it intensifies in the second clause. The cases are numerous (Prov. 19:4; 13:12; 11:23; 10:28; 10:2, 3). So here:—“*Of no profit are treasures of wickedness, but righteousness delivers from death.*” That is, the highest opulence of the dead sinner is of no possible profit: but the righteousness of the saved sinner, even without any opulence at all, is a fortune; for, like the “charm of the lamp,” it wakes for him everlasting blessedness.

- 3 Jehovah will not starve the righteous appetite;
but the craving of the wicked He will thrust away.

3. The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.

“Let a wise son make a glad father,” for, when we are dead and gone, our children, if wise, will never have an ungratified desire. If they are wise, they will never want what is not for good, and nothing else will ever be withholden from them. If they are kings, and not Christians, their desires will ultimately be “*thrust away;*” but if they are peasants, and believe in Christ, they shall be kings. God with Christ will freely give them all things (Matt. 6:33). So then, can we will to them anything better? “*Appetite;*” *soul*, literally; but one of those cases of the word (see 7:23) where it means *throat* or “*appetite,*” as is partly proved by the antithetical expression.

- 4 He is poor who acts with a languid hand; but the hand of the diligent makes riches.

4. He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.

Not only will God provide for the wise, but wisdom itself is a provision. “*He is (a) poor (man) who acts (the sluggard.)*” Even if you leave your son rich, his very laziness is a wretched poverty. “*The hand of the diligent makes riches,*” even if it earn little; the meaning being that active work is itself a treasure. Or, passing into the realm of piety, which is the one intended:—He is a poor man who is a sluggard in his soul’s work, and a rich man who is awake and active. Our treasure is within. “*My meat is,*” said our Great Exemplar, “to do

the will of him that sent me." And on our dying bed, our money will be of small account, but our work will be the splendid fortune that will follow the believer (Rev. 14:13). Not "*he becometh poor*," therefore, (E. V.), but "*he is poor*;" and not "*maketh rich*" (E. V.), but "*is rich*," or "*makes riches*." This use of the Hiphil is frequent with Solomon. "Labor not to be rich" (23:4). "He that maketh haste to be rich" (28:20). In David, also, "When one is made rich" (Ps. 49:16). It would require counting to see whether the cases without the causative were not just as numerous as with the usual Hiphil signification. It is not true, therefore, that "the hand of the diligent maketh rich" in a worldly sense; and it forgets the supremacy of Jehovah's* disciplines. "*Makes riches*." There is, no doubt, a freshness of causative expression which can be thrown into all these passages without departing essentially from the idea "*is rich*."

- 5 He that stores in summer, is a prosperous son.
He that snores in harvest, is a son to bring shame.
- 5 He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.

Which reads still more practically than the last. Good habits are themselves prosperity. The good, active Christian is necessarily well doing in the world. "*Prosperous*;" literally, *looking out, watching sharp*; and by so doing, "*prosperous*," or *thrifty*. The hard working Christian is a rich man, *se ipso*; nay, *re ipsa*. We need not look at his earnings. He is "*prosperous*" in his very state. Be a man ever so rich; and let him be ever so active in temporal affairs, yet, if he is sleeping in the great business of the spirit, the Wise Man has but one sweeping text:—He "*is a son to bring shame*." "*Snores*." This is the literal Hebrew, and is so translated by Maurer.

- 6 Blessings are for the head of the righteous man;
but wrong covers the mouth of the wicked.
- 6 Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

"**Blessings:**" not simply good things, but good things be-
• "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and liftest the needy out of the dunghill."
(Ps. 113:7).

stowed by another; not simply good things bestowed by another, but divinely bestowed as sacred *benedictions*. “*Blessings are for the righteous*” exclusively; that is, for no one else. “*For the head*;” not the mouth, not the hand; because often without either’s agency. *On his head*; because unconsciously, and sometimes even when asleep. “*But wrong*.” That is *doing wrong*. “*Covers*.” That is, shuts up all chance for blessing. “*Covers the mouth*:” not covers the “*head*” (1st clause), as though against unconscious gifts, but “*covers the mouth*,” as though against the sinner’s wakening desire for blessing. “*Covers the mouth*;” that is, shuts up all chance either of feast or comfort. The total fruition of impenitents is evil, and that, in what they thought not evil but good. “*Wrong*” being *wrong doing*, it makes them a nuisance, and, being a nuisance, it isolates them, and makes it an evil that they should have any good. “No evil shall happen to the righteous, but the wicked shall be *filled* with mischief.” Zöckler and most of the commentators translate:—“*the mouth of the wicked hideth violence*.” But this grammatical rendering fails to tally with the first clause, and also forbids the beautiful translation of the eleventh verse, where the same second clause occurs, but where, as directed by the first clause, we translate by the same as in verse 6th, but with a strikingly obverse signification:—“*A well of life is a righteous mouth*,” that is, a well of life to others; “*but wrong covers the mouth of the wicked*,” that is, keeps it from dispensing blessing. In the sixth verse good is shut out. In the eleventh verse it is shut in. Meantime the language is the same, and the difference is taught by each earlier clause. A foolish son, therefore, should be the grief of a mother because his mouth is imperviously closed against either blessing or being blessed.

7 The memory of the righteous man is a
 blessing;
 but the name of the wicked rots.

7 The memory of the
 just is blessed: but the
 name of the wicked
 shall rot.

Not what he remembers, but what is remembered of him. He blesses after he is dead. So does the wicked, but, like most other growths in nature, by his decay. “*Name*;” that

which is known of a man. The "name of God" is what may be known of God. "The memory of the righteous," viz., of the church of God, is that which propagates her and causes her to hand down her strength. Our walk about Zion, our telling her towers, our marking her bulwarks is for this grand aim among the rest that we may tell* to the generation following (Ps. 48: 12, 13).

8 He of the wise heart shall lift away the
commandments; and he of the foolish lips shall be the one
entangled.

8 The wise in heart
will receive command-
ments; but a prating
fool shall fall.

The English Version, "*The wise in heart shall receive commandments*" is built upon the idea that the verb means *to take*, or *to receive*, and upon the obvious sense that this clause would then have by itself. But in what antithesis would it be to the other clause? and really what point in its own significance? The word usually *to take*, means often *to take away* (Job 12: 20; Gen. 27: 35). We are unauthorized in such a supposition, but we seize upon it greedily none the less, and wonder that in the great embarrassments of the sentence, recourse has not been sooner had to this full unravelment. "*He of the wise heart shall lift away the commandments.*" "*Laws*" would make a good translation. The word usually translated "*laws*" has been seen to mean "*directions*" (1:8). The word "*commandments*" (E. V.) might often be translated "*laws*." One set of passages would just change words with another. The word translated "*commandments*," means primarily *something fixed*. It answers to a judicial reckoning and is correlate to ideas belonging to punishment and to pardon. "*He of the wise heart*" means the truly wise. *He of the fool heart* might seem good for the rest of the sentence. But a deep philosophy reminds the inspired man, that men are not such fools as to believe in sin, as the pardoned Christian does in holiness. They know a great deal more than they either act or utter. A vast deal of the worldliness of men is a mere lip service, like that to the Al-

* "It" is in Italics. One object of one generation's faith is, to go sounding on to another.

mighty. And, knowing that the lost man is aware of his perdition, and has been told his folly, the Proverb does not account him a fool in his deep sense, so much as superficially, and in the mad actings of his folly. In his "*heart*" he knows he is deceived. In his "*lips*" he is constantly deceiving himself. In his acts he keeps up a fictitious life. In his picture the inspired Solomon declares that the wise in heart shall *take away*, that is *lift off* and *get rid of* judicial guiltiness, but that the *fool*, or, as the original root is, the *turned aside* or *crooked in his lips*, shall be the one that shall be left "*entangled*." For a long while this last verb was a perfect mystery. It occurs but four times in the Hebrew; and the old writers have translated it in almost every imaginable way. At last its Arabic cognate was found to occur often, and to mean undoubtedly, to *fall prostrate*. This, therefore, became the later rendering. But a closer inspection of the facts shows that the Arabic cognate has two meanings, and that one of these is, to be *ensnared*, or *roped in*; perhaps, originally, to *fall into a trap*. This is the meaning we are emboldened to propose. It begets immediately a fine evangelic sense. It achieves an entire antithetical balance. And when our last clause reappears, as it does bodily in the eleventh, it completes that verse, and lifts it out of the same embarrassments, and the same want of logical completeness as have been witnessed in the present.

9 He that walks in integrity, walks securely ;
but he that makes his ways crooked, shall
be made to know it.

9. He that walketh
uprightly walketh surely : but he that per-
verteth his ways shall be known.

"**In integrity.**" The root means *to be whole, to be complete*. *To walk in integrity* means to act according to one complete scheme; not as the fool does (v. 8), behaving one way, and believing another. It means to aim for "*something stable*" (2:7); and, hence, of course, not to lay our plans so that we ourselves know they must ultimately fail. "*He that walks in integrity, walks securely*;" that is, must certainly succeed. "**But he that makes his ways crooked.**" This is the same idea; *knows the straight, but takes the crooked*; the man who knowingly takes a path that

does not seem to him right. The well-pointed prediction seems to be, that in the end of his journey his folly shall be forced upon his notice. “**Be made to know.**” It is the Niphah. And yet it is not “*be known*” (E. V.). It is to be rendered like some rare Niphals (see Jer. 31:19), where the ordinary passive gives way to a causative passive in the form we have translated.

- 10 He of the lowering eye shall give sorrow, | ^{to He} that winketh
and he of the foolish lips shall be the one | with the eye causeth
entangled. | sorrow; but a prating
fool shall fall.

That particular closing of the eyes which implies deep thought, and which, when mixed with enmity, implies schemes of vengeance, is plainly the thing which this sentence indicates. The verb occurs but five times. It means *to clip*. Once it is translated literally (Job. 33:6), “I also am clipped (or nipped, like a potter’s lump) off of the clay.” Once it is applied to the lips (Prov. 16:30), “Clipping (or compressing) his lips, he brings evil devices to pass.” The other three times it is applied to the eyes. It means in each that “lowering” of the “eye” by half closing or corrugating the brow, which betokens thought, and, if hostile, patient mischief. “*Winking with the eye*” is in our English version; but that is more cunning and less terrible. “Neither let them wink with the eye, etc.,” (E.V.) (Ps. 35:19). “*Let them not have a lowering eye.*” In Prov. 6:13, the idea of enmity is thrown out. “*He has meaning in his eye.*” In Prov. 16:30, as already said, clipping or compressing is talked of as of the lips, but with the same general significance; tight-lipped or compressed plotting or resolution; with this peculiarity, however, that eyes are also used, and with another verb, that means also *to close*, and which sheds light, therefore, upon this other. “Shutting his eyes to devise upturning things, tightening his lips, he accomplishes evil.” The Wise Man, therefore, is giving us a picture of the Almighty. He was speaking in the last Proverb of men finally finding out their folly, and now he introduces the Most High. “*He of the lowering eye shall give sorrow.*” That is, there is One, knitting His brow, and patiently scheming His vengeance all the time. The righteous will know

how to escape, but here, as in the eighth verse, “**he of the foolish lips shall be the one entangled.**”

- 11** A fountain of life is the mouth of a righteous man; but wrong covers the mouth of the wicked. | ¹¹ The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

A church is but a body of righteous men. What would the world do without the church? The influences of a church, and that a land is ruined without a church, and that one generation hands on the worship of God to another; all are illustrations on a grand scale of how **the mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life.** A good man will constantly be doing good to others. And this introduces that clause we spoke of under the sixth verse as appearing here under an obverse meaning. The clause is literally the same; but in the sixth verse it means, “**Wrong covers the mouth of the wicked,**” so that he can taste no blessing; while in this case it means that wrong so covers his mouth that he can give no blessing; so keeps him from any possible usefulness, that he cannot utter good, or make his mouth, as the righteous can, “*a fountain of life*” to all about him.

- 12** Hatred stirs old quarrels; but love covers all sins. | ¹² Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.

The “*wrong*” that shuts the mouth of the wicked from being “*a fountain of life*,” opens it as a fountain of death. A merely “worthless man,” a “sluggard,” says chap. 6:14, is “putting forth causes of quarrel all the time.” “**Hatred**,” which is something more positive, but which, after all, is but the absence of holy affection, may, therefore, well be said to **stir up old quarrels**, literally, “*causes of strife*.” These things widen interminably. Only one agency can smother their growth. A pious affection, called in the language of this text, “*love*,” under the arrangements of the covenant of grace, will stifle sin, and finally utterly eradicate it, not only in the soul where it begins, but in many another soul, to whom it may be a fountain of blessing. For, “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a

multitude of sins." "Quarrels ;" chiefly between God and the soul.

- 13 Through the lips of the discerning wisdom
is found;
but a rod for the back of the senseless
man.

13 In the lips of him
that hath understand-
ing wisdom is found :
but a rod is for the back
of him that is void of
understanding.

"Through the lips of the discerning," that is, of the Christian, other men, that is men not "discerning," get "wisdom." If we will think a moment, men get it in no other way. "Faith cometh by hearing" (Rom. 10:17). The church hands itself down, by the blessing of heaven, from lip to lip. But then from the same lips comes "a rod." The good man, not listened to, becomes a scourge. Christ himself becomes an instrument of death. "*Through the lips of the discerning wisdom is found; but a rod for the back of the senseless man.*"

- 14 The wise store away knowledge;
but the mouth of the fool early ruin.

14 Wise men lay up
knowledge : but the
mouth of the foolish is
near destruction.

"The wise," by their very living increase their light. They "store" it. Each several wise act lays up a higher intelligence. Each separate bad act lays up a more thorough "ruin." "Early;" literally, "near" (E. V.).

- 15 The wealth of the rich is his strong city.
The destruction of the poor is their poverty.

15 The rich man's
wealth is his strong
city : the destruction
of the poor is their pov-
erty.

"The wealth of the rich" even in this world is their great capital. Wealth earns wealth. "The destruction of the poor" is the helplessness and friendlessness and creditlessness and lack of instruments incident to "poverty." In the spiritual world the distinction is entire. The rich gets richer, the poor gets poorer, and both by inviolable laws. All works for good for one, and all for evil for the other. The last Proverb explained it. Wisdom, by its very nature, grows, and so does folly. All other interests vibrate; sometimes worse, and sometimes better. But Wisdom, like the God that chose it, has no "shadow of turning." If it lasts in the soul, it grows forever. If it does

not begin, it grows more distant. There is never rest. “*Wealth*” in the spiritual world, by the very covenant, must continually heap up; and poverty, by the very necessities of justice, must increase its helplessness.

The next verse still advances the idea:—

- 16 The labor of a righteous man serves as life; | 16 The labour of the
the gains of a wicked man as a sin-offering. righteous tendeth to
life: the fruit of the
wicked to sin.

‘The labor of a righteous man serves as life;’ (1) because it is a good thing in itself; (2) because it procures good, each stroke earning its pay; (3) because it increases, and that as its bent, making us holier and happier, and making others holier and happier through the endless ages. It “*serves*” preeminently “*as life*,” therefore; literally, “*is for (ɔ) life*.” But “**the gains of a wicked man**” (and we must not fail to notice the *crescendo* in the second clause: “The *labor* of a righteous man”—“*the gains* of a wicked man;” the righteous still toiling, the wicked having made his harvest) serve “**as a sin offering**.” That is, they are all demanded by justice, and are all consumed for the expiation of his sins. Pious acts are a life. Wicked gains go to swell what our great Creditor seizes. “*Sin offering*;” see 13:6.

- 17 He that watches admonition is a path to life; | 17 He is in the way
but he that lets go reproof puts others astray. of life that keepeth
instruction: but he
that refuseth reproof
erreth.

This is the idea of other verses (11, 13), that a man, going to heaven, blazes a path for others. Not “*in the way*” (E. V.), but *is a way*. Others travel upon him in his prayers and in his example: while the last clause confirms the interpretation by saying, “**he that lets go reproof puts others astray**.”

- 18 He that hides hatred with lying lips | 18 He that hideth
but puts forth slander, is himself the fool. hatred with lying lips,
and he that uttereth
a slander, is a fool.

We have found it hard to choose between two meanings:—one, that, while concealing hatred is a lie, gratifying it by slander is a folly. Then the reading would be:—“*He that*

hides hatred is a man of lying lips, but he that sets afloat slander is a fool." In this case the sentiment is, that a due mean lies in neither conduct. But the grammar as to "*lying lips*," and the whole drift of the sentence marks it as a Proverb of but one clause. "**H**e that **hides** **hatred** **with** **lying** **lips**," and goes to work secretly to defame and villify, is double-paced in his transgression. "**F**ool;" not the word that means *crooked*, but the word that means *fat*, and, therefore, *stupid*. He thinks it is the victim that is deceived; but God is the avenger of all such; and it is "**himself**" that is "*the fool*." "**H**e that **hides** **hatred**" is, perhaps, not a sinner; and this may be another reason for the second sense. But "**he that hides hatred with lying lips**," is a most insidious sinner; and the sending forth "*that which creeps*," which is the original expression, is a most admirable account of these fair-spoken ministers of hate.

In this close connection, Solomon remembers that men without malice often make mischief: v. 19—"In a multitude of words trespasses never cease." A man of inordinate talk, runs inordinate risk. He must be a God that can talk all the time and never trespass. And, therefore, as blunders "come home to roost," he is a *prosperous* man who reduces the volume of his speech. The verb translated "*prospers*," means *to be intelligent*, in many places; but, in many more, it grew to mean *to prosper*. As in Joshua (1:8), "Then shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and then shalt thou have great success." Therefore we do not say "*wise*" (E. V.), but we present the whole sentence thus:—

19 In a multitude of words trespasses never
cease;
but he that restrains his lips, prospers.

19 In the multitude
of words there wanteth
not sin: but he that
restraineth his lips is
wise.

Still, speech is a great blessing. Wisdom, like a posture-master, must balance herself. One Proverb is poised against another (see Prov. 26:5):—

20 Choice silver is the tongue of a righteous
man.
The heart of the wicked is as a scrap.

20 The tongue of the
just is as choice silver:
the heart of the wicked
is little worth

- 21 The lips of a wise man feed many ;
but fools die for want of heart.

| 21 The lips of the
righteous feed many :
but fools die for want
of wisdom.

"Choice silver is the tongue of a righteous man ;" because the whole church has been built up by it. It is the great instrument of salvation. "The heart of the wicked" is mentioned, and not the tongue, to make the second clause more intense. He is a curse throughout. "As a scrap ;" we translate literally; though the noun is so uniformly translated "little," that it has hid the primary rendering. To a Hebrew eye it would wear its original look of a slight *chip* or *scraping* ; and becomes here most graphic in its particular text. "*The tongue of a righteous man is choice silver ; the (whole) heart of the wicked is as a scrap.*" He has no value to himself, and none to his Maker, except as a warning against the waywardness of others. There follows a Proverb that fits on to this idea of worthlessness. "The lips of a wise man feed many," but they can not feed any one who has no heart. "Fools die for want of heart." We have seen a Proverb (v. 13) going farther and saying, that, while "through the lips of the discerning wisdom is found, a rod" also comes from the same source to "the back," literally "of the man without heart." The letter killeth (2 Cor. 3:6). The tongue of the wise is not a blessing in itself.

But now mark a power that is :—

- 22 The blessing of Jehovah that itself makes
wealth ;
and He adds no sorrow with it.

| 22 The blessing of
the LORD, it maketh
rich, and he addeth no
sorrow with it.

"Blessing ;" i. e., an uttered thing, like the words of the wise. But while the tongue of the wise may be either for life or death, Jehovah speaks and directly gives life. "The blessing of Jehovah itself makes wealth," and (not like the word of the wise) "He adds no sorrow." "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." The preaching of the truth may be to them that perish foolishness, but the blessing of Jehovah has always but one result. The first blush of His favor carries with it all good things. "Makes wealth ;" one of those mongrel Hiphils already alluded to (see v. 4). The blessing of Jehovah is itself the "wealth."

- 23** As a jest to a fool is the execution of a' ²³ It is as sport to a purpose; fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom. but it is wisdom to a discerning man.

A senator, or judge, a king, full of the cares of state, might seem to have a grave purpose. But ask him! If he says that life is a cheat, and that he is working for an eternity of pain; then cannot I say, that it is a life of jests? If a man can give no good account of his business, or tell where its profit is, then "**as a jest is the execution of (his) purpose.**" The difference between the lost and the saved is, that to one it is but trifling to live; to the other it is the gravest "**wisdom.**" "*As a jest*" is thought by some to mean, *as a happiness, as a thing to be rejoiced in.* "*Purpose*" would then mean *a bad purpose*, and that most generally is the sense. The text then would read, "*To a fool the execution of his wickedness, but to a discerning man, wisdom, is as a thing of joy.*" Zöckler ordains this rendering; but it is less racy in its sense, and no stronger on the whole in its grammatic motive.

What the wicked knows as to his trifling, he knows also as to his guilt and danger. He has fears, therefore; and the Wise Man announces that:—

- 24** What the wicked man dreads comes of its ²⁴ The fear of the own nature upon him; wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of righteous men shall be granted. and a desire of righteous men shall he gratify.

"**What, etc.**;" literally, "*the fear*" (E.V.), i. e., the *object of his fear.* "*Of its own nature.*" Such is the force of the emphatic pronoun. It must not be neglected. A farmer may fear a flood, and it may never come; but a sinner fears wrath, and it comes past doubt. It travels needfully, and as "*of its own nature.*" See another strong intensifying:—The fear of the "**wicked**" comes upon him: but not only does the fear of the righteous not come upon him; not only are his **desires** granted; and not only do they take the place of his fears; but, as one of the amazing and awful doctrines of the word of God, the fear of the wicked coming and crushing him, shall itself fulfil "**a desire of righteous men.**" Hell shall not mar the joy of the saints, but (alas! sad

doctrine!) the torture men endure shall seem necessary in Heaven as among the “strange works” (Is. 28 : 21) of the Almighty.

Then, as to the thing which the sinner fears, the Wise Man describes it:—

- 25 There is as the coming up of a whirlwind,
and the wicked is no more;
but the righteous is an eternal foundation. | 25 As the whirlwind
passeth, so is the wicked
no more: but the
righteous is an ever-
lasting foundation.

Mark in this the *suddenness*, the *thoroughness* and the *helplessness* of the sinner’s ruin. The righteous may be poor, and, in his sinful state, anything but a stately building to the Lord, but in his meanest infancy he is “**a foundation.**” Very little appears above the surface. But he is the basis of all that is to be built, and that basis is to be “**eternal.**” Other readings may be possible:—“*As the whirlwind comes up and is no more, so the wicked; but the righteous, etc.*” Again, “*When the whirlwind passes, the wicked is no more, etc.*” This last has many advocates. Our own, however, is more regular in grammar, and depicts with more graphic force the sudden destruction of the ungodly (Matt. 7 : 27).

It is not to be wondered at that God should thus sweep away the slothful. They are an offence to Him:—

- 26 As vinegar to the teeth and as smoke to
the eyes,
so is the sluggard to them that send him | 26 As vinegar to the
teeth, and as smoke to
the eyes, so is the slug-
gard to them that send
him forth.

“**Send him forth.**” How mad it would seem for God to uphold a creature, and inspire the motions of his life day by day, when, like “**smoke to the eyes,**” he is an abomination.

That the wicked, therefore, should be hurried off the earth, is not wonderful, and might seem to favor the English Version in what follows:—

- 27 The fear of Jehovah makes great days;
but the years of the wicked shall be made
little. | 27 The fear of the
Lord prolongeth days:
but the years of the
wicked shall be short-
ened.

But the Wise Man modifies the Proverb to suit the facts.

"The fear of Jehovah" is not certain to prolong a man's "days," and sometimes shortens them, as in the instance of Christ himself. And when they have been laid in the grave, the righteous and the wicked have the same eternity. But the righteous days are "great" and noble, and the wicked's days are mean and small. And this is the meaning of the Proverb. "Made little," literally, "*shortened*" (E. V.). We thought at first that this was decisive against our sense, and against our rendering of all the verses expounded in chapter third (2:16). Our thought of this was increased by Job 14:1, and by all the expositions. But when we turned to Ps. 102:23, our own sense was wonderfully confirmed. That verse reads (E. V.), "He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days:" where "*shortened*" must have a sense coincident with continued living. And what that sense is, such passages as these:—"Is my hand shortened?" (Is. 50:2); "The soul of the people was shortened," (Num. 21:4; see also Mi. 2:7; Judg. 16:16; Job 21:4); "The days of his youth hast thou shortened," (Ps. 89:45), and nearly all the other instances strikingly confirm. The meaning is, Wisdom makes our days grander and grander, and Impenitence makes them weaker, and always of less account.

This is so, even if the righteous is a feeble man, and the wicked one bold and confident:—"The hope;" literally, the *painful, patient waiting*, the *being in pain*, like a woman in travail:—

- 28 The hope of the righteous turns to joy;
while the confidence of the wicked per-
ishes.

28 The hope of the
righteous shall be glad-
ness; but the expecta-
tion of the wicked shall
perish.

The Proverb means this literally. "*The hope of the righteous (itself) turns to joy.*" Faith is the beginning of felicity. "*The confidence of the wicked;*" as, for example, in getting rich, or rising high: the assurance of the impenitent man, even if he finds it well placed, "*perishes*," as of its very nature. "*The world passes away and the desire thereof.*" The lost may have had all he wished, but his very wishes perish at the last day (John 2:17)!

- 29 The way of Jehovah is a fortress to the upright,
but ruin to the workers of iniquity.

29 The way of the Lord is strength to the upright: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.

The English Version misses everything here, and in the second clause gives us an instance of a rendering that ought to have disproved itself by its useless and unmeaning truism. A Proverb, we may be sure, is a shrewd speech. This Proverb is an exceedingly sagacious one. “**The way of Jehovah;**” not the way He marks for us, but the way He personally walks in; (as, for example, His way of justice). “**Is a fortress to the upright.**” To Gabriel, for instance, it is the arch that shelters him forever; to the poor saint it is a sworn certainty of defence; but to the wicked it is an eternal vengeance. The way of mercy; that is, in the cross of Christ; is opening life to the saint, and heightened death to the rebellious sinner. Elihu pictures this in the outward creation (Job 36 : 31). “**For by them**” (that is, by the same elements of nature) “**judgeth He the people; He giveth meat in abundance.**” The same showers fertilize the fields, or tear to pieces with a deluge.

It is foolish to make a matter of faith of anything but partially revealed, and that, because slenderly important. Where the righteous are to live after the resurrection, is an affair of matter, and not an affair of momentous faith. It may be in some other system. But this next Proverb, and many another verse of the Holy Word, seems to indicate this “**earth**” as being heaven; that is, this earth, when finally restored:—

- 30 The righteous man shall not be moved for ever:
but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.

30 The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.

“**Moved,**” not “**removed**” (E. V.), but *shaken: shall not be seriously disturbed.*

- 31 The mouth of the righteous blooms forth wisdom:
but the upturning tongue shall be cut out.

31 The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out.

The figure here is of a *sprout*, or *seedling* which has the

capacity to grow forever. “**Wisdom**” is such a tree. It grows from “**the mouth**” of the good man, and will grow forever; that is, the good man will incessantly spread abroad wisdom. God, who is invisible, spreads abroad wisdom only through the creature. But the ungodly “**tongue**,” overturning everything, and, in this world, being the great instrument for leading others astray, will be put in a condition to be foiled of such an influence: as the inspired sentence expresses it, will “**be cut out**.”

- 32 The lips of the righteous man are instinct
with kindness :
but the mouth of the wicked with subver-
sive things.

³² The lips of the
righteous know what is
acceptable: but the
mouth of the wicked
speaketh frowardness.

“**Are instinct with**;” literally, “**know**:” meaning that they live in that thought, and are moulded by it in all they do. The last word in the sentence is the same as in the text before. “*The tongue of upturnings*” (v. 31); i.e., the tongue that would disturb and overthrow. The tongue of every impenitent is instinct with influences of ruin. Solomon affects such sentences as express as intrinsically as possible the essential conditions of our living.

CHAPTER XI.

- 1 False balances are an abomination to Je-
hovah :
but a full stone is His delight.

A FALSE balance is
abomination to the
LORD: but a just
weight is his delight.

This is repeated, with varied language, three times (16:11; 20:10, 23). The tendency of all the commentators is to treat it as descriptive of men. It seems conspicuously to be asserted of the Almighty. Sentences like chap. 10:29, “The way of Jehovah,” i.e., His mercy and His gospel tenderness, are “ruin to the workers of iniquity,” make the doctrine a very timely one, that God is in His very essence just; that He takes no liberties of an arbitrary nature; that He is the administrator, not at all of fate, for this is blind and unreasoning, but of eternal rectitude; that we need give ourselves no care of our

government, for that He has no temptation to do us wrong: because “**false balances are an abomination to Jehovah, but a full stone is His delight.**” “**Stone;**” a very ancient material for weights, which gave its name to the class long after it ceased to be employed. It is still a weight in Britain. “**A full stone**” means an honest weight. *Stone*, not rusting, was not changeable. “**Delight.**” This is rather a strong version. It only means, that the Almighty has the eternal *desire* to be absolutely just. Omniscience, omnipotence and this *desire* must make an immaculate administration. It is enough for the wicked to be “a smoke to” God’s “eyes” (10 : 26). He will not, by a false balance, become an abomination to Himself.

- 2 Has pride entered? then enters shame; but with the lowly is wisdom.

² When pride com-
eth, then cometh
shame; but with the
lowly is wisdom.

Gabriel is the prince he is, solely from the Spirit. It is because God gave him the Spirit, that he remained in grace; and it was because God took the Spirit, that Satan fell into apostacy. “**Pride,**” therefore, is a mad vanity. If false balances are an abomination to God, He would not be apt to let “*pride*” flourish. And yet pride does flourish in worldly things. The “**shame**” here must mean that spiritual contempt which looks to the whole eternity. It is only (1) out of contempt for him, that God lets a man be proud; and it is only (2) contempt and “*shame*” that can follow upon the proud thought. Pride itself is an evidence of God’s contempt. And being “**humble**” not only (1) invites “**Wisdom,**” and makes her feel at home; not only (2) flows from Wisdom, because she is at home, but (3) actually “*is Wisdom.*” The word “**with**” is a very intimate one. It would not do to say, *Has humility entered? There also enters wisdom;* for *humility is Wisdom*, and could not exist unless Wisdom had entered already.

- 3 The integrity of the upright leads them: but the slipperiness of the spoilers makes themselves also a spoil.

³ The integrity of
the upright shall guide
them: but the per-
verse ness of transgres-
sors shall destroy them.

A man, to be led, must have a way; and, to have a way, he

must have an end at which he is aiming. The end of the “*up-right*” man is righteousness itself. If the great joy of heaven is uprightness, and the price of wisdom is above rubies, of course, “*integrity*” is the best guide in the world, because, of course, righteousness is the best guide to righteousness; and, poor or rich, the righteous man is always advancing in his treasure. Righteousness is also the best guide to happiness, for no good thing shall be withholden from them that walk uprightly. Sin, on the other hand, by increasing itself, is itself its own seducer. It may be boastfully rich; but the wiles “*of the spoilers make themselves the spoil*.” Poverty and wealth make not the difference, but our intrinsic state;—*that* is our wealth or ruin. “*Also.*” The particle *and* or *also* has given trouble, and led to a various reading; but such particles are, no doubt, seldom mistakes, and “*also*” in this instance connects the “*spoilers*” with their victims. The “*slipperiness of the spoilers*” may do mischief, but rest assured, says the Wise Man, it “*makes a spoil also, of themselves.*”

“*Wealth*,” therefore, is not the question:—

- 4 Wealth profits not in the day of wrath : | 4 Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.
but righteousness delivers from death.

How badly led those are who are not righteous, appears in this:—that while “*righteousness*” does everything for a man in journeying to his end, “*wealth*” does nothing for him. “*Wealth*,” which seems to be the great guide of the human family, not only cannot *deliver*, but cannot *profit* in the crisis of fate. While “*righteousness*,” all covered with stains, lets no day go to waste; lets no mile be utterly lost; lets no fear ever be realized; still grapples a man’s hand; and still guides a man’s tread, till he steps at last into the regions of safety.

- 5 The righteousness of the man of integrity | 5 The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.
levels his way :
but the wicked shall fall by his wickedness.

“*The righteousness of the man of integrity*” is perfect only in heaven, and how it “*levels his way*,” appears best by the per-

fect facility of walking in that bright abode. It will be no trouble there to travel forward. While more work will be done in heaven than here, yet there it is done so easily that it is called a "Rest." The paths of this world are not only difficult, but deadly. "**The wicked**" will not only struggle, but "**fall**" in them; and the roughnesses at which he stumbles, are not ever in the paths themselves, but really in his own "**wickedness**."

- 6 The righteousness of the upright delivers them :
but by desire are the treacherous taken.

6 The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them : but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness.

Men are made by their desires. "**The righteousness of the upright delivers them;**" literally, *draws them or snatches them away*. Life finds us in a deadly land, and "**righteousness**," which is a matter of "**desire**," draws us, and, step by step, leads us out, and lands us on a better soil. The "**desire**" of the wicked not merely fixes where it is, but leads on deeper. The "**desire**" of the lost is the bait that ruins him. However misleading to others, he is specially "**treacherous**" to himself. "**Desire**" after the poor things of life becomes the bait to trap him into ruin, just as piety is drawing away from it the regenerated man.

- 7 By the death of a wicked man hope is lost ; and the expectation of sorrowing ones is lost already.

7 When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish ; and the hope of unjust men perisheth.

It is sad to be drawn into ruin by "**desire**" (last verse); because it breeds only "**hope**," and that is sure to perish. "**The world passes away, and the desire of it**" (1 Jo. 2:17). "**By death**," the stately sinner, who has succeeded everywhere, must part with his "**hope**"; and *before* death the "**sorrowing ones**," who are left nothing but a *desire*; that large class of men whose life is negative, and whose joy has gone out in bitter disappointment, are well characterized by our Proverb as those whose "**expectation is lost already**." "**Already**" is expressed by the perfect tense. The first clause had the future.

- 8 The righteous is delivered from distress : and the wicked comes into his room.

8 The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead.

“Delivered.” The original is, “*drawn out*,” or “*drawn away*.” It is well to keep this in mind. “**The righteous**,” whether suddenly or gradually, beyond all doubt, eventually, is *drawn out of straitness*, or “*distress*;” “*and the wicked*,” gradually, or suddenly, *enters in*.

- 9 By the mouth the ungodly destroys his neighbour:
but by knowledge the righteous are delivered.

9 An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.

“**The mouth**” may stand for all mutual influences. “**The ungodly**,” by his influence, “**destroys**” others. “**But by knowledge**.” No word could be better chosen. By *light*, i. e., by *one spiritual ray*, temptation takes a new place with us. Before, temptation hurt us; afterward, it works with other things for our good. When God converts a soul, He gives it light. That light makes it invulnerable. All things afterward help it. “**Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt**.” Satan is one of the blessings of a Christian. “*By the mouth the ungodly destroys his neighbor, but by knowledge the righteous are delivered*.” Though the speech of one sinner destroys another, the righteous, by the knowledge that is born within them, are *drawn out*. “**All that is born of God overcometh the world**” (1 Jo. 5:4). Light, which is the sum of the new birth, bespeaks every grace and *delivers* from all danger.

- 10 By the good of the righteous a city exults : and by the perishing of the wicked there is a cry of joy.

10 When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth ; and when the wicked perish, there is shouting.

“**By the good** ;” not “*in the good*” (Zöckler); not “*when it goeth well*” (E. V.). “**By the perishing of the wicked** ;” not “*when the wicked perish*.” A city is very far from exulting *in* the good of the righteous, or *in* the destruction of the wicked. But “*by*” or “*by means of*,” as the unacknowledged cause, there comes the exulting and the shouting. That is, a city is blessed by the prosperity of righteous men. “**Good**.” This word cannot be translated. It means both *good* and *goodness*. If we say “*good*,” the “*good of the righteous*” will mean their

welfare. If we say "*goodness*," it will mean their *piosity*. The word in the Hebrew means both. The text, to be complete, must confine itself to neither. Our translation is necessarily ambiguous. The city is not only blessed by the good that characterizes the righteous, but by the good that happens to them. How glorious this becomes when "*the righteous*" mean the Church! The wilderness and the solitary place have been glad for Her. It is true of all the universe. As the history of Heaven and Hell, the "*good of the righteous*" and the "*perishing of the wicked*" will breed universal benefit. It was such texts as these that moved the Papists to realize the good by actually slaughtering the wicked out of the land.

- 11 By the blessing of the righteous a city is
lifted up:
but by the mouth of the wicked pulled
down.

11 By the blessing
of the upright the city
is exalted: but it is
overthrown by the
mouth of the wicked.

Piety is in proportion to usefulness. If a Christian does not bless his city, it is a mark against him. **Bless** means to *invoke good*. The English means to do good in any way; but in Hebrew there is more confinement to what is primary. "**The mouth of the wicked**" pulls down a neighborhood by every form of teaching. "**The righteous**" builds it, and especially by prayer.

- 12 A heartless man is contemptuous to his
neighbor:
but a man of discernment is silent.

12 He that is void of
wisdom despiseth his
neighbour: but a man
of understanding hold-
eth his peace.

"**A heartless man**;" *a man destitute of heart*. All such are titles of the unsaved man. "**Is contemptuous to his neighbor**." The same negative state, i. e., a want of the Spirit, and hence a want of benevolence, not only keeps men from blessing their city (v. 11), but makes them "*contemptuous*." Others' interests do not weigh a feather. See a fine description of this in 1 Cor. 13, where men are supposed even to "behave unseemly" from this high theologic fact. They do not care for their neighbors, and, therefore, do not care to behave well. If a neighbor is disgraced, they are too "*contemptuous*" to care for its effect.

They are reckless in their talk of his disgrace; while “**a man of discernment is silent.**”

This is more fully exhibited in case of positive secrets. An unsanctified man rips them cruelly **open**. A man “**of a faithful spirit**” does the very opposite. He tries to cover them, when they have begun to come abroad. The unsanctified man (lacking benevolence) loves the slight gratification of a prurient scandal better than his neighbor’s peace. Hence what follows:—

- 13** He who goes tale-bearing lays open secret
counsels: 13 A talebearer re-
vealeth secrets: but he
that is of a faithful
spirit concealeth the
matter.
- but he who is of a faithful spirit covers up
a matter.

“**Who goes tale bearing.**” The expression comes from trading. He who gads about to indulge in gossiping, will gratify his taste by scandals that he did not intend to divulge. “**Secret counsels;**” that formal divan, where purest privacy is the thing that has been expected. It is these slight lusts, as we think them, that divulge character. It is a lack of love (1 Cor. 13). The man that is born again, will be “*of a faithful spirit*,” and will scorn to gratify scandal at a neighbor’s cost.

Such a man speaks, however, where speaking will do good:—

- 14** Where there is no helmsmanship a people
fall: 14 Where no counsel
is, the people fall: but
in the multitude of
counsellors there is
safety.
- but by the greatness of a counsellor there
is salvation.

Care seems to be taken after a Proverb lauding silence, always to put in a eulogy of speech (see 10:20, 21). Secrets are not to be hid until the whole community is one covered over wickedness. The same faithfulness that conceals a secret, intrudes counsel, and grasps control, and saves the people by that leadership that the pious alone are intended to achieve. “**Helmsmanship;**” from a root meaning a *cord*; hence the tackling of the *helm*; and, now, that princely guidance, which piety in the world (though the world does not think so) does actually bestow. “**Salvation.**” The inspired sentence-maker is always managing what the music men would call a *crescendo*,

for the second clause. The first clause speaks of the people as *falling*, the second clause not only as *not falling*, but, though fallen, as actually raised. “*Where there is no helmsmanship a people fall, but by the greatness of a counsellor there is salvation.*” “*By the greatness of a counsellor.*” Nothing is so strong as that “poor wise man” (Ec. 9:15), that delivers the city. Above all, nothing is so strong as that *Mighty Counsellor* who is, perhaps, more than hinted at in the words of our text.

For :—

- 15 The evil man does ill because he is surely
 for a stranger :
 but a hater of sureties is the believer.

¹⁵ He that is surely
 for a stranger shall
 smart for it ; and he
 that hateth suretis-
 hip is sure.

See our treatment of these passages, chap. 6. “**The evil man does ill;**” that is, the impenitent sinner may trace all his evils to a sad case of **suretyship**. The Hebrew is so plain that different intensive readings would not have been invented for it, if this doctrinal sense had been one sooner to be maintained. “*The evil man;*” literally, the masculine adjective. It means “*evil*” in all senses, even down to *unfortunate*; the *hapless man*. “*Does ill;*” i. e., does ill in all senses. “*Shall smart for it*” (E. V.); a grasping after an intensive force where one is let slip that is much more obvious. Taking the greatness of the “*Counsellor*,” as it has gone before, and the “*Woman of Grace*,” as immediately after, and there are sufficient hints in the context to give all the most doctrinal interpretation. All evils of the evil sufferers spring from one implication with Adam; a suretyship that we may renounce at pleasure; a liability, in which we stand to a Friend (6:1); a liability, therefore, which we should importune Him out of, as our immediate care; *giving neither sleep to our eyes nor slumber to our eyelids* (6:4): for, a “*believer*,” that is, one who trusts this great Friend, and casts himself upon His clemency, is one who hates this ancient curse, and will deliver himself out of it by every importunity in his power. This is, if anything, a little too advanced; and we paused long before we discarded the wording, “*He who hates sureties feels secure.*” Doubtless such an idea is meant to be included. Moreover, “*believer*” is not

an Old Testament word, and we cannot match the Hebrew in exactly so advanced a sense (though see Ps. 21:8; 32:10). But the most advanced sense, with the Holy Spirit, if just, is, doubtless, the most just, because it is most exhaustive of all the significance of the passage. The clause, as we give it, contains all senses up to the most extreme.

- 16 Grace gets hold of glory;
and the violent get hold of riches.

| 16 A gracious woman
retaineth honour ; and
strong men retain
riches.

“**Grace**;” literally, “*The Woman of Grace*.” It sheds a strong light upon the “*Woman of Folly*” (9:13). If that could be translated simply “*Folly*,” this could be translated simply “*Grace*.” The “*Woman of Grace*,” therefore, is “*grace*” personified. And “*Grace getting hold of glory*” means that we arrive at glory after all that *surely* (v. 15) under the curse, simply by the “*grace*” of Christ. “**The violent get hold of riches**.” Our Saviour repeats the thought (Matt. 11:12). Men without law break in by “*Grace*,” not by right. “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence.” “*Grace gets hold of glory, and the violent get hold of riches*;” for, as our Saviour expresses it in the same verse of the evangelist,—“The violent take it by force.”

And yet it is no violence to others, but a great blessing:—

- 17 He who manages for his own soul is a man
of mercy :
and he who afflicts his own flesh is cruel.

| 17 The merciful man
doeth good to his own
soul ; but he that is
cruel troubleth his own
flesh.

The best thing a man can do for the universe is to get himself off from the curse of Adam; and the **cruellest** infliction upon his race is to leave “**his own flesh**” in chains. God will overrule everything, and will make even hell a blessing. But we are speaking of things direct. “The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.” Their mere life breeds death. Their most admirable courtesies, on that very account of their moral lowness, breed ruin; and, like the walking pestilence, they carry it wherever they may journey. “**Manages for** ;” literally, *deals for*, whether *well* or *ill*. In cases like the present, *well* is im-

plied. The majority of commentators invert the order,—“*A merciful man manages well for his own soul, etc.*” But this is not the order of the Hebrew, and is not the most important sense.

- 18 A wicked man doing a deceiving work,
and he who sows righteousness having a
true reward,

18 The wicked work-
eth a deceitful work:
but to him that soweth
righteousness shall be
a sure reward.

“**Work;**” the whole life-work. “**Deceiving.**” It pretends to be of value, but is an injury. “**And he who sows righteousness;**” he who makes all of life a seed-time, and lets the seed sown be “*righteousness*;” “**having a true reward;**” not only a real reward, but a reward accurately measured; just as much reward as he sows righteousness; the whole of an impenitent man’s life being a mistake; the whole of a righteous man’s life being a seed-time, because the seed is righteousness, and it has a real and an exact reward;—

On this principle—“*thus:*”—

- 19 thus righteousness is unto life,
but he that chases evil does so to his death.

19 As righteousness
tendeth to life; so he
that pursueth evil,
pursueth it to his own
death.

It has been a fault to overlook the participles (v. 18). It is not often that two verses are united in this part of the book. The former of the two (v. 18) has a very rich and independent sense, and it is not wonderful that its grammatical incompleteness should not have been noticed. It hands over its copious significance to the present text; for by the יְהִי, “**thus,**” the purpose of the participles is thoroughly brought within our vision. If righteousness is a seed, and is sown, and has a certain crop, then, in this way, “**righteousness is unto life; but he that chases evil does so to his death;**” i. e., he grows in spiritual corruption, and, that, eternally.

He grows in spiritual corruption, not because creatures are self-subsistent, and advance by laws implanted in themselves; but because sin is the punishment of sin, and advances by laws implanted in the Almighty. Eternal justice declares that sin

must be given up to an advance in sinning, and that, because it is a festering ill, abominable in the universe :—

- 20 An abomination to Jehovah are men crooked in heart : but men of integrity in their way are His delight.
- 20 They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the Lord : but such as are upright in their way are his delight.

A “ground of quarrel” in the universe (6:19) and “**an abomination to Jehovah**,” are things identical with each other. The universe is but the thought of God, and God is then the norm of the universe. “*An abomination to Jehovah*,” as taught in this book, (6:16) is a thing so radically full of mischief that it must be forced out of the way some day, by the very necessities of the universe :—

- 21 When hand to hand the wicked shall not go unpunished : but the seed of the righteous shall be let off.
- 21 Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished : but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.

Two combatants may *manceuvre* in ways painless to each other, but, “**when hand to hand**,” the weaker must go to the wall. God chooses to manœuvre His force through years of trial. “*When hand to hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished*.” The hint from the English, commentators seem not to have taken. There is no like idiom frequent in the Hebrew. Still, there can be no doubt about the sense. “*Though hand join in hand*” (E. V.) is neither as grammatical, or significant, or agreeable to the analogies of speech. There is such a time; when Jehovah will meet the sinner “*hand to hand*.” He will by no means clear the guilty (Ex. 34:7). “**But the seed of the righteous** ;” not simply the “*seed*” of righteous people, because it includes the parents themselves; not simply the parents, because it includes the children; not both parents and children, because many children perish; but the “*seed of the righteous*” in the sense (1) that righteousness runs in lines; (there is a “generation of them that seek Him”) (Ps. 24:6); and (2) that the righteous, as far forth as they are righteous in the parental relation, will have godly children (Gen. 18:19; Titus 1:6).

Righteousness itself (by its fidelities) has its offspring in Christian families. This is the favorite method of the church's growth. As to the expression "let off," it is very doctrinal. The primary meaning is, *to smooth over*, and, in this Niphal form, *to be smoothed over*, or *to be made slippery*, so as to *slip* or *glide away*. We were all under bonds (v. 15), but the seed of the righteous shall *slip out*.

Next comes a very incisive word as to who are "*wicked*" (v. 21). Men may be very adorned in station, and yet be brutish in the eyes of God. Many may be very adorned in character, and yet, as amiable impenitents, may be abominable in the sight of Heaven. The quality of being "*tasteless*" (see next verse) belongs to all who are without the relish of the gospel. Be life ever so much adorned, it is the lowest brutishness, in that case, in the eyes of its Creator. This is all shut up in what follows:—

- 22 A gold ring in a swine's snout;
a fair and tasteless woman.

| 22 *As a jewel of gold
in a swine's snout, so is
a fair woman which is
without discretion.*

For a Proverb, the sentence has links enough. The "*woman*," as in many another passage, will answer for all humanity (see 1 Tim. 5 : 6). To the Almighty, a loathsome "*swine*" is as the fairest of unsanctified intelligence. Of course all lower senses, as, for example, a literal "*woman*," with a very weak or a very impure beauty, *a fortiori*, may be marked as counted in.

- 23 A wish of the righteous is only good:
an assurance of the wicked is wrath.

| 23 *The desire of the
righteous is only good;
but the expectation of
the wicked is wrath.*

Here we are to contrast "*a wish*" and "*an assurance*," like that class of passages already alluded to (11 : 4), where such expressions as *house* and *tent*, *house* and *revenue*, *great man* and *mean man*, (14 : 11; 15 : 6), make the last clause intensive. The mere "*wish of the righteous is*" (*an intrinsic*) "*good*;" either, first, because *all* actings of his heart, whether wise or unwise, will exercise him (Ps. 84 : 7), and will speed him to his celestial state; or secondly, because the wish of a righteous man, *quoad a righ'eous man*, will be a righteous wish, and, therefore, will

be good in itself, and will be sure to be gratified. The wish of a righteous man, like the spongelets of a tree, is that which goes searching for God's gifts, and is sure in the end to attain them. Therefore, emphasizing "only," the wish of a righteous man will be made altogether to work for his good, however disappointed, and however kept low and troubled in the difficulties of the present life. But "**an assurance of the wicked;**" that is, a thing so grasped and reached as to be no longer a "*wish*," but a certainty; wealth, when it is made his, or honor, when it is actually grasped, will not only be lost; will not only be followed by "**wrath;**" will not only be "*wrath*" in the sense of actually bringing it; but "**is wrath**" in the sense of being sent as punishment, and in the further sense that the sinner knew it all the time; and that his "*assurance*," though it seemed to be a certainty of joy, was, lower down, a certainty of punishment; we mean by that, an "*assurance*" (which he would confess if he were asked) that all his properties could end only in increasing retribution.

Therefore, building up assured things for ourselves, is not really the best way to get on. Building up assurances even of heaven is not the best way to attain to good:—

- 24** There is that scatters and is yet increased :
and there is that keeps more than is right
only unto want.
25 The soul that blesses shall be made fat :
and he who gives to drink shall himself
also have drink given.

24 There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth ; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.

25 The liberal soul shall be made fat ; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

Give and thou shalt receive. John Howard, when he grew sad about his piety, put on his hat and went about among the poor. He came back a gainer. He diverted his mind from his own interests, and yet promoted them in a higher assurance. Religion being benevolence, as well as a love of holiness, doing good to others, is a philosophic way of ripening it in ourselves. Verse 24th has its Poor Richard phase as well as a higher one. Being "penny wise and pound foolish" is understood even in our shops. But the grand sense is evangelical. "*In serviendo*

aliis consumor" may be true of poor impenitents, but a candle is no emblem for a Christian. He is a glorious sun who by some strange alchemy brightens by shining. V. 25. "*Watereth*" (E. V.) refers to the ground, or to animals. **Giving** plenty "**to drink**" is the meaning of the verb as applied to men.

A more practical bearing is given to the next verse:—

- 26 Him that hoards corn the people curse : | 26 *He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.*
- but blessing is for the head of him that sells.

When Christ tells us (Matt. 5:42) to give to him that asks us, he by no means instructs us to give or lend money at the beck of every applicant; any more than literally to turn our left cheek (Matt. 5:39); but he means to indicate a general attribute of benevolence. So, **hoarding corn**, when it is taken off of a glutted market, and returned to a straitened one, is so far from being wrong, that God directed it in Egypt. It is a favor both to the farmer and to men at large. But the cruelties of these things are undoubtedly aimed at, as in usuries (Ps. 15:5), and the exacting of debts (Matt. 6:12).

- 27 He who is eager for what is good, hunts up | 27 *He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.*
- favor :
but he who goes in quest of evil, it shall
come to him.

From the last Proverbs it has appeared that going directly after our selfish gain, is really going after evil. Joy is innocent in itself; and yet, gone after absorbingly, it is an evil end. "Whosoever shall seek to save his soul shall lose it" (Luke 1:33). Solomon, therefore, utters a most philosophic truth, when he says:—"He that is eager for what is good;" that is, who forgets himself, and is *early* (for that is the original sense) after what is intrinsically right and holy, that man is really the person who is **hunting up favor**. That is, if he could really gain it by hunting it up directly, and for his selfish good, he could not gain it more directly than by forgetting it, and striving for what is pure. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you"

(Matt. 6 : 33). Then follows the antithesis. “**He that goes in quest of evil**,” as one is conscious that he does when he turns his heart selfishly even after innocent joys, “it,” i. e., *evil* “**shall come to him**.” Nothing can exceed the sharp simplicity of the passage. He that goes after what in itself may be innocent; like money; or like the support of life; in a way that to his own conscience makes it confessedly evil, shall have it “*come to him*” at the end of his course, infallibly as evil. The grandest wealth shall be a torment to him in the day of misery.

There is a distinction, therefore, between a man and his wealth. The wealth may flourish, and the man may decay:—

- 28** He that trusts in his riches shall fall himself; but like a leaf shall the righteous put forth. | 28 He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

A Proverb may be lost by neglecting a particle. This, in the English Version, is a barren text; and solely because the pronoun, which is rarely introduced, appears in this Proverb, and is not noticed. Our Version says, “*shall fall*.” The Hebrew has it “**shall fall himself**.” “**He that trusts in his riches**,” may trust in that which may not disappoint him. That is, it may remain great, and may follow him to the grave. But while his riches are piling up, he “*himself*” is shrivelling away. It is not the rich, but they that *trust in riches*, a distinction which our Saviour borrows (Mark 10 : 24). He takes much from these Proverbs (comp. v. 25, and Luke 6 : 38). The truly important thing is the man “*himself*,” and while the unregenerate “*falls*,” or decays, the righteous, even without money, prospers. He grows from within. That is, *he* grows, and not his money. He “**puts forth**,” very feebly, it may be, in the beginning; but it is his own eternal nature. While the worldling “*himself*” decays, “*like a leaf shall the righteous put forth*.”

- 29** He that troubles his own house, inherits the wind; and a fool is servant to the wise in heart. | 29 He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind; and the fool shall be servant to the wise of heart.

The lower and the higher meaning which we have traced in

the Strange Woman, and in the texts on suretyship, and which appear in histories and prophecies all through the Bible (because all teach the gospel) are beautifully discriminate in the present text. “**He that troubles his own house,**” as most ambitious men do by grindings of self-denial, that reach on past the time of any enjoyment, shall forget the end in the means, and, stumbling into the grave, shall *inherit nothing but “the wind.”* The wealth of such a man shall go to make others happy; for “**a fool is servant to the wise in heart.**” But “**he that troubles his own house**” in any form of impenitence; he that takes the trouble to live without the gospel; he that chases wealth, when he admits that it will breed him vengeance; he that goes through the self-denials of the world, to accumulate worldly benefits which he knows are mischiefs to his soul; not only “*inherits the wind,*” but is absolutely “*fool*” enough to be the “*servant,*” in all these trials, and that through eternal ages, of wiser and better creatures.

This service which the lost render, against their will, the righteous render by their very nature:—

30 The fruit of a righteous man is as of a tree | ³⁰ The fruit of the
of life: righteous is a tree of
and one who catches souls is the wise man. life; and he that win-
beth souls is wise.

He may begin as a “*leaf*” (v. 28), but he ends as a “*tree.*” Nay, he has “*fruit*” from the very beginning, and that “**is as of a tree of life.**” The English Version in speaking of the “*fruit*” as the “*tree,*” confounds the metaphor a little, but has a simpler grammar, and an equal sense. The tree of life made the partaker of it immortal. “*The fruit of the righteous*” is immortal life to many a poor sinner. *The winner of “souls is the wise man.”* This might read in either way:—*The winner of souls is wise, or the wise is a winner of souls.* It doubtless should be read in both. The grand “*tree of life*” on earth is the man converted already. The man converted already will be a “*tree of life.*” Both doctrines are true. Either is consistent with the text. Both are consistent with each other. Neither can be asserted as exclusively the sense. And, therefore, in so terse a passage, I see no recourse but to understand the He-

brew as pregnant of both. It is of the very essence of wisdom to be benevolent; and it is the very height of benevolence to **catch** the souls of the impenitent. Moreover, no soul is like to be caught but by the wise.

There follows a motive for this catching, of a double sort, the reward of the "righteous," and the reward of the "wicked." A man who is wise feels the impulse of both. The former of these rewards, viz., the reward of the righteous, is very peculiar; for "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Is. 64:6). No man, however Christian in his spirit, does anything but sin. "There is not a just man" (and we may say, There is not a just act) "upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not" (Ec. 7:20). To talk of rewarding the righteous is, therefore, an anomaly in court; for, strictly speaking, it is rewarding a man for sin. Strictly speaking, it is not *rewarding* a man at all; for, judicially, it is not paying back an agent so much happiness for so much service, like Gabriel; but rather making the broken beginnings of reform, grade, for the regenerate man, his bliss hereafter. The reform of the saint is not really holiness, but an approach to it. And so the reward of the saint is not strictly a reward, but a promise—a promised measure of good. And that is what is meant by what follows:—

31 Behold, the man righteous on earth shall
be recompensed;
because also the wicked and the sinner. 31 Behold, the right-
eous shall be recom-
pensed in the earth:
much more the wicked
and the sinner.

Not "*recompensed in the earth*" (E. V.); for that is not true. Above all would the second clause not be true, for Solomon takes care to tell (Ec. 9:2) that "there is one event unto all." It is not true that the wicked are punished "*on earth*" "*much more*" (E. V.) or much less than any other class; or that their punishment in this world bears any relation whatever to anything you may choose to mention. "*On earth*" has such a location as to be placed with either word, and the sense directs that it mark the arena of trial and not of the reward. "**Because also.**" Because the righteous are not strictly rewarded in a judicial sense except as for the obedience of their Redeemer, that does not prevent their rewards, such as they are, being

given for great ends of justice, just as in the instance of the wicked. Why these words should be translated “*much more*” (E. V.) as they are, we could never imagine. It mars many a passage (see Class XLIV). They are very simple; both, very significant; and neither, difficult to translate; and why they are not oftener rendered “*because also*,” just as they mean, we are at a loss to fathom. The meaning is, Those “**righteous on earth shall be recompensed**,” not strictly, indeed, but for the same general reasons as “**the wicked and the sinner**,” viz., the ends of government. The Septuagint very oddly branches quite away, and makes a text that St. Peter repeats:—“If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (See for these discrepancies 25 : 22).

CHAPTER XII.

1 HE that loves discipline, loves knowledge ; | WHOSE loveth instruction loveth knowledge : but he that hat-
and he that hates reproof, is brutish. | eth reproof is brutish.

This is a great text. We may expect great texts where there is a look of common-place. The thought raises itself two stories at least in the respect of doctrine. “**He that loves discipline** ;” that is, he that, instead of fretting at that mysterious Providence of God which we call *evil*, enters into its deep experiences, and learns to value it as precious to his soul; that man “**loves**” *light*, or *gospel knowledge*. That is the first story. But, now, he who takes a much wider view, and looks at all the gains from evil to the universe; how impossible would be high forms of knowledge—how utterly unconceived by any one not Infinite, without the foil of either observed or experienced misery; that man acquiesces in all the evils that are seen in the creation; *loving discipline because he loves knowledge*; and acquiescing even in hell itself, because he suspects its absolute necessity in the providential system. “**Brutish** ;” derived from a root meaning *cattle*. Mourning over our griefs, which seems to be the work often of a refined and delicate na-

ture, is here asserted to be “*brutish*.” He is but a Hottentot in the ways of the Almighty, who does not see that the crushing of his hopes has been one of the tenderest methods of his redemption.

Let blind reason condemn God. He who has gospel light, will see Him as One out of whom he can **draw favor**:—

- 2** A good man draws out favor from Jehovah; but a man of mere intellect pronounces Him guilty. 2 A good man obtaineth favour of the LORD; but a man of wicked devices will he condemn.

That is, we awake to consciousness in a foward, or lost state. Now, the Bible confesses that to the foward God shows himself foward (Ps. 18 : 26). The natural man, therefore, coming under such disciplines as are alluded to in verse 1st, when he follows his “*mere intellect*” (literally, *meditation*, or *deep reflection*), is very apt to find fault with God, or to **pronounce Him guilty**. But the “*good man*;” that is, the man not only pure himself, but doing good to others; looks upon God as a fountain of blessing; knows that His judgments only conceal His mercies; and learns, by spiritual light, to *draw out* from Him living “*favor*.” “*Pronounces guilty*.” All commentators either understand this as of God pronouncing the man guilty (E. V.), or (sinking the Hiphil) of man as being guilty, or appearing so, on account of “*wicked devices*” (E. V.). But the sense is much finer, as given above. “*Devices*,” or *meditations* are not necessarily *wicked devices* (see Class XXXIII); and though “**Him**” does not actually appear in the text, yet it is most legitimately understood; and the sentence, in grammatical ease, is altogether advanced by our interpretation. When judgments press, mere “*intellect*” condemns God; but a man, who is good himself, will see, under the judgments, opportunities of abundant favor.

- 3** A man shall not be set firm by wickedness: while the root of the righteous shall not be shaken. 3 A man shall not be established by wickedness; but the root of the righteous shall not be moved.

To “*pronounce*” God “*guilty*” is foolish; for what can a man

expect but "*discipline?*" (v. 1.) "Wherefore doth a living man complain? a man for the punishment of his sins" (Sam. 3:39)? "**A man shall not be set firm by wickedness:**" and a man, being wicked, how shall he expect anything except that he shall be disturbed? While the saint, though "**shaken**" in leaf and bough, and storm-tossed, and, perhaps, broken in his branches, yet "**shall not be shaken**" in his "**root.**" The vindication of our great Lord is then perfect. The wicked, in the very nature of things, must fall. The "**righteous,**" though swept by chastisements, has his *roots* deep struck, and they cannot be "*shaken.*"

A man, too, must expect trouble if he have mad alliances. Does he link himself with evil, he must partake of the storms that buffet it:—

4 A capable woman is her husband's crown: 4 A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones.

"**Capable;**" sometimes "*virtuous;*" literally *strong*. "It is well observed by Michaelis (Suppl. No. 719), that in the early stages of society, when the government and the laws had little influence, fortitude was the first and most necessary virtue; and might, therefore, naturally give its name to the other virtues. Hence *virtus* in Latin and *ἀρετή* in Greek, which, according to their etymology, denote mainly strength and fortitude, came, at length, to signify virtue in general (*Holden*)."
 "**Crown;**" that is (1) *ornament* and (2) *source of power*. A virtuous "**woman**" is both to her husband. But "**as rottenness in his bones.**" A spendthrift, drunken, or adulterous wife is so entrenched in our being, that our very bones, that is, our very dearest interests (Ps. 35:10; Jo. 19:36), are rotten, when these qualities begin their influence. A man, linked with such disorders, can not complain of his inevitable "*reproof*" (v. 1). Women, however, in all this book seem to be types of qualities; —of Grace (11:16); of Wisdom (14:1); of Folly (9:13). See also Class L. The "*Capable Woman*" has not stood before us in all her true light, till she stands as Wisdom; nor "**One that causes shame,**" till we make her Impenitency. The "*Ca-*

pable Woman" is our "*crown*;" for, with faith, all things are ours; and her Great Rival is our shame, for, with unbelief, there is "*rotteness*" in our very "*bones*." This disposition always to see a figure must not be set down as fanciful, till the Woman of Grace and the Woman of Wisdom and the Woman of Folly and other still more artificial cases (Rev. 12:1) have been thoroughly considered.

But why are "**the righteous**" allowed to mate with evil?—

- 5 The plans of the righteous are a judgment: | ^{5. The thoughts of}
the helmsmanships of the wicked are a de- | ^{the righteous are right:}
ceit. | ^{but the counsels of the}
^{wicked are deceit.}

"**Judgment.**" This word, which is very common in the Bible, means a judicial decision. The "*judgment*" of the wicked is a verdict of the Almighty consigning them to hell. The "*judgment*" of the righteous, by what Christ has wrought out, is a verdict of eternal reward. A bad management, therefore, is a reward. I mean by that, it is a part of an eternal blessing. "**The plans of the righteous**," however disastrous they may seem, "**are a judgment**." And as the "*judgment*" of the righteous is in his favor, his plans, however bad, are shaped in him for his good. Whatsoever storms they may lead to, they are from a most prosperous verdict; and have been allowed to supervene, for his highest, and well-graduated good. Mark now the climax (as in 14:11). It says, "**the plans of the righteous**," leaving us to suppose they might be very wretched. It says, now, "**the helmsmanships of the wicked**," leaving us to suppose they are very shrewd. The keenest calculations of the wicked, where a cool eye is at the *helm*, and where, instead of marrying a foolish wife (v. 4), he has built grandly for the world; still, as "*a judgment*;" I mean by that, as the whole verdict in his case; his very "**helmsmanships are a deceit**." (1) His own wisdom cheats him in ordering his life; and (2) God Himself, as a part of His award, takes care that he be deceived as to his total well-being.

The whole toil of the impenitent, therefore, is a trap to him:—

- 6 The words of the wicked are a lying-in- | ^{6. The words of the}
wait for blood: | ^{wicked are to lie in}
but the mouth of the upright shall deliver | ^{wait for blood: but the}
them. | ^{mouth of the upright}
^{shall deliver them.}

"The words." Speech is the great instrument of man. Talking is his trade. Wall Street and Lombard Street make their fortunes by the tongue. "**The words of the wicked**" are, therefore, their highest activities; and our Proverb declares that these high acts are but "**a lying in wait for blood.**" We would not deny that this may include the blood of others; but, in the light of the last verse, the grand victim is themselves (1 : 18). If "*the helmsmanships of the wicked are a deceit,*" then the headway that follows, is but "*a lying in wait for blood.*" Each order on Change is for a man's last discomfiture; while a saint may make bad marriages, and sail awfully on the earthly sea, yet, as part of his "*judgment*" (v. 5), shall come out right. His very orders, though insane, shall be so overruled, that his "**mouth**" shall, in one way, "**deliver**" him.

Say not, the wicked are often so obviously better off. That is but in this world:—

7 Be there overthrow to the wicked, there is ⁷ The wicked are
nothing of them left: ^{overthrown, and are}
but the house of the righteous shall stand. ^{not: but the house of}
^{the righteous shall stand.}

Eventually, there must be "*overthrow*"; even if it be no "*overthrow*" but death. When "**the wicked**" do fall, "**there is**," positively, "**nothing of them left.**" While in the deepest disasters of the "**righteous**," nothing is not "*left.*" "**His house;**" and by that is meant every possible, real interest (1 Sam. 2 : 35), "**shall stand**" forever.

According, then, even to worldly principle, why ought not the righteous man to have the credit?—

8 In exact proportion to his shrewdness is a ⁸ A man shall be
man applauded: ^{commended according}
but a man of crooked sense is a subject of ^{to his wisdom: but he}
contempt. ^{that is of a perverse}
^{heart shall be despised.}

"**In exact proportion;**" such is the meaning of the Hebrew; literally, *at the mouth or direction of*. A man is more applauded for good sense, than, perhaps, any thing else. "**Shrewdness;**" that attribute that leads to success. Therefore it sometimes means *success* (2 Kings 18 : 7). *Successful "shrewdness"* is a

very positive sort. Such is the shrewdness of the righteous man (v. 7). “**Crooked sense;**” literally *crooked heart*; though *heart* (Hebraic) contains more of *sense* (*vovq*) than we ascribe to it. If a man whose mind works crookedly every time, becomes an object of “**contempt,**” why ought not the wicked to become so, whose very, “*helmsmanships are a deceit*” (v. 5).

The self-glorification of worldly things ought but to increase their contemptibleness; for how is it again in worldly matters?

- 9 A man that is little noticed, but is a servant
to himself, is better
than he who sets himself up for something,
and is without food. 9 *He that is despised, and hath a servant, is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread.*

“**Little noticed;**” *made light of*; from the verb *to be light*. “*And hath a servant*” (E. V.). The sense would be alike, and equally grammatical. “**A man that is little noticed and hath a servant;**” that is, has the solids of life; or, better, “**is a servant to himself;**” that is, is not caring so much for what people think, as for his own solid good; that man, is better than “*thou, (that) sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*” (Rev. 3:17).

The worldly care of a high prosperous man may seem very tender to those dependant on him, and towards others; but the very tenderness of an impenitent example is the higher snare:—

- 10 The righteous takes thought for the life of
his very beast:
but the tender mercies of the wicked are 10 *A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast; but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.*

Religion has no austerities that make a true saint careless of the “*life*” or feelings even of “*his beast*.” On the contrary, it breeds the most pervading tenderness; whereas the wise worldling, however careful of his home, and tender toward all who have any claim upon his care, yet, in admitting that there is a hell, and neglecting all prayer for his household, and all example, except one that braves the worst, breeds children simply

to destroy them. The wealth he gives them may seem a tender provision, but this tenderness will sink them the deeper. The good man cares even for his beast; “**but the tender mercies of the wicked are**” *themselves a cruelty*.

It may do in worldly matters to speculate, and get clear of actual labor; but it will not do in religion. A man must work the very soil of his soul, or he can get no harvest:—

- 11** He that works his own land shall be satisfied with food: but he that follows after empty people is void of heart. | ¹¹ He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding.

“**Empty people**;”—most signally the impenitent; for we have seen that they are *empty* of all good. “**That follows after empty people**;” a fine characteristic of the impenitent man’s decline. He is not following after the “*empty*” only in doing as they do; but he is absolutely *following* them. Following others is the commonest influence to destroy the soul.

Solomon goes further:—

- 12** The wicked longs for the prey of evil men; but the root of the righteous gives to others. | ¹² The wicked desireth the net of evil men; but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit.

The impenitent does not prefer to work the soil of his soul, as in the last verse, but is in hopes to gain by something easier; he likes to seize as in the chase, or as robbers do. He likes to seize without having produced or earned. “**The wicked longs for the prey**” (that is, something *hunted* or *trapped*, not got by digging);—the common spoils, (as “*evil men*” rob), of the kingdom of heaven, without the pain of being a Christian. “**But the root of the righteous**,” not only goes through solid processes of piety, but (another intensive second clause, 14:11), earns for others, as well as for itself. While impenitence would take heaven as in a net, religion works for it, and, in so doing, “*gives*;” (“*to others*” is not in the Hebrew); that is, “*gives to others*,” as well as to herself.

On the other hand, the wicked, instead of trapping the kingdom, trap their own souls:—

13 In the transgression of the lips is an evil snare : but the righteous gets out of the strait.

13 The wicked is snared by the transgressions of his lips : but the just shall come out of trouble.

All human conduct is represented by the "lips" (v. 6 and 14:3). The tongue is a foremost business agent. The impenitent, though he may stand out very clear, and see no tokens of a net, yet, as his life is false, literally, *rebellious*; for the original means "*rebellion of the lips*;" his not seeing the "snare" shows only how more insidiously he may be tangled in! What can a man hope for, *Deo Judice*, if he be *rebellious*? While "**the righteous**," though he may be born to the "snare;" originally condemned; and though he may be caught in the toils of great worldly evil, yea, of sin itself; yet out of the very "**strait**," i. e., out of the very jaw of the trap where he may have foolishly entered, he will in the end be helped to **get out**.

And while the righteous, both for this world and another, is willing to do fair work (v. 12), and to earn life solidly and at serious cost, he is on that very account fair to others:—

14 With the earnings of the mouth of a man of the better sort, the good man will be satisfied : and the reward of the hands of a laboring man he will render to him.

14 A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth ; and the recompence of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him.

This is the whole question of capital and labor put in a nutshell. *All* is not to be claimed by the "**hands**"; for there is the "**mouth**" that directs and orders. *As much* is not to be claimed by the "**hands**"; for the Bible is a good truthful book, and it claims for the mind more than for the muscle. (See this distinction in Ec. 10:10). "**A man of the better sort**," with his education, and expensive capital, earns more, according to the inspired Solomon, than the "**laboring man**." What he demands of the Christian gentleman is, that he shall make an estimate of all this, and, while he keeps, himself, "**the earnings of the mouth of a man of the better sort**," he render carefully to the laborer the wages of his "**hands**." We have no authority for this interpretation. We present it as unquestionably just. The translation it would be hard to give literally. The words

are about thus:—"From the fruit of the mouth of an שׁׂרָא (or man of the better class) a good man will be satisfied; and the wage (literally, the work) of the hands of an בַּדָּא (or common man) he will render (literally, return) to him; (return, in the sense of giving back what really has gone into the affair). This fair, calculating spirit in all questions between man and man, not bending to communism on the one hand, and not yielding to tyranny on the other, is the true spirit of the inspired gospel.

As a step further in being just, the good man will listen to others:—

- 15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: | 15. The way of a fool
but he who listens to counsel is wise. | is right in his own
eyes: but he that
hearkeneth unto coun-
sel is wise.

All through our lost nature the truth of this Proverb is visible. A man may be on the road to hell, but think that he is fair for heaven. A man may build by rapine, but think that he is the pink of fair dealing. A man is not a judge about himself. A Christian, therefore, will feel this; and, while the impenitent is hard as to his own right, the Christian will be humble, and will be glad, in reasonable ways, to leave his duties to be advised upon by others.

So thoroughly true is it that "a fool" is wise in his own eyes, that, when he becomes foolish in his own eyes he is no longer a fool:—

- 16 A fool, in the day that he is made to know | 16. A fool's wrath is
his provocation, | presently known: but
also covers over his shame, a wise man. | a prudent man cover-
eth shame.

"Made to know;" a Niphal, usually meaning *is known*, but here, as in 10:9 and in Jer. 31:19, a causative passive, and meaning "*made to know*." The moment a sinner is made to know how he has offended, he "**covers**" up "**his shame**," and becomes a "**wise**" believer.

- 17 He that breathes forth truth, publishes | 17. He that speaketh
righteousness: | truth sheweth forth
but the deceived witness, delusion. | righteousness: but a
false witness deceit.

This Proverb is in two respects an advance upon the one that

precedes it. First, he who is "*made to know his provocation*," is made to know all things. "*Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus*." He who knows all things, being born again, and brought to a spiritual discernment of "*truth*," "*mutters it forth*," i. e., "*breathes*" it like his breath, unconsciously and instinctively (8 : 7). And now, secondly, he who does this, not simply *covers over shame* (v. 16), but causes others to; for he advertises "*righteousness*," i. e., "*publishes*" it. This, therefore, is the meaning of the sentence: "*He that breathes forth truth, publishes righteousness*," i. e., saving righteousness; and does it like uttering forth his "*breath*." While "*the deceived witness*;" literally *the witness of falsehood*; a phrase which is ambiguous, because it might mean *a witness to falsehood* (see 6 : 19)—"*the deceived witness*," i. e., the man who sees or witnesses falsehood instead of truth, *publishes* (understood) "*delusion*"; i. e., is a constant fountain of deceit to other men. This sense of the *witness of falsehood* is necessary to many Proverbs (14 : 5), and saves a number from tautological or truistic interpretations.

The mischief of "*the deceived witness*" is often visible in his very speech. It wounds and jars, as compared with healthful piety:—

- 18 There is that babbles like the piercings of a sword:
but the tongue of the wise is healing. 18 There is that
speaketh like the
piercings of a sword:
but the tongue of the
wise is health.

"**Babbles**;" like the babbling of the insane; yet with this difference;—that the tongue of the insane is innocent, while the babble of the fool is deadly. "**Like the piercings of a sword**." Speech stands for all agency. The verse is intensive, like so many in Solomon. While the speech of the lost stabs "*like the piercings of a sword*, "*the tongue of the wise*," not only does not pierce, but *heals*, where the wound has already been inflicted.

Of the two, which ought to perish, the *wounding* or the "*healing*" agency? The Wise Man makes answer:—

- 19 The lip of truth shall be kept up forever: but only while I wink the tongue of falsehood. 19 The lip of truth
shall be established for
ever: but a lying
tongue is but for a mo-
ment.

"Kept up;" literally *be made to stand, or be set firm* (see v. 3); but neither of these figures applies very well to the "lip." Therefore we say "*kept up*." The Christian shall utter forever just the things that he utters on earth. "While I *wink*;" an old Hebraism, very expressive, and as well to be retained. "*Kept up*," not by itself, but by Another.

Though the deceiving "lip" is so deadly, the spring of the deception of others must be in a deadlier deception for ourselves. This the next verse adverts to:—

- 20 Delusion is in the heart of them that plot²⁰ Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the counsellors of peace is joy.
evil:
but for the counsellors of good is joy.

The 17th verse puts "delusion" in contrast with "righteousness." One man spreads "righteousness" in its high example; the other man, *mistake*. Holy acts disseminate one; mere blindness the other. Advancing upon the 20th verse,—"*delusion*," then, is the only thing that can *delude*. Hence the man who is the most active to deceive, is himself always his chiefest dupe; and hence men who are "counsellors of good," become themselves, therefore, also, its main inheritors.

Both states, too, are total; that is, they are on all sides complete. The good have nothing but good, and the lost, even in this world, only mischief:—

- 21 No calamity happens to the righteous: ²¹ There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.
but the wicked have been filled with evil.

"No calamity;" literally *nothing worthless or empty*. The root means *nothingness, entire vacuity*. The expression, too, is peculiar. "*There shall not happen to the righteous man any nothingness at all.*" But as several of the nouns that mean evil, through a deep philosophy, trace to the same kind of root, "*calamity*" or *actual evil* is the proper translated sense. No event that turns out an actual "*calamity*," can ever happen to the saint. And if any one points to their tremendous agonies, it is well enough to go back to the root, *nothingness*. Nothing *worthless*; that is, nothing that proves not so useful as to be

better than present joy; nothing not actually precious. In the whole course of their lives, each is "filled with" their own proper lot. "**The wicked**," if he have joys, will find them sorrows; and the righteous, if he have sorrows, will find them, not *nothings*, but for his eternal joy. "**Have been filled**" (preterite); i. e., never were in any other case. This is a very precious text. Why is it not more quoted? It tells boldly that no evil shall happen to the righteous; and then announces the fact of *total evil*, precisely akin to *total depravity*, as the fact for the wicked. The lost are not *totally depraved* in the sense of being as bad as they can be; for they shall be worse. So the lost are not *totally under evil*, in the sense of having as much of it as there can be; for they shall have more. But, as a man is totally depraved, in the sense of having every trait and every act bad; so a man is "*filled with evil*," in the sense of having it springing from every influence.

Now, as in other passages after sweeping texts (20: 22, 23), there comes this general reason:—

- 22** An abomination of Jehovah are lips of falsehood: but they that practise truth are His delight. 22 Lying lips are abomination to the LORD; but they that deal truly are his delight.

The *lip* of "truth" is to last, and of "falsehood" not (v. 19), because the one is not, and the other is, "**an abomination of Jehovah**." *Quoad* the laws of nature there must be no "*quarrel*" (6: 19; 17: 20); and *quoad* the Lord of nature there must be no "*abomination*." That which amounts to either must necessarily go to the wall.

Folly is apt to be more conspicuous than wisdom. For the wise, thinking his wisdom folly, is too humble to parade it. And the fool, thinking his folly wisdom, is uttering it all the time.—

- 23** A subtle man conceals knowledge: but the heart of the stupid promulgates foolishness. 23 A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.

"**Subtle**;" from a root meaning *crafty, cunning*; opposed to "**stupid**;" literally *fat, crass*. The saint has the highest *craft*

and the lost are more *fat* of mind than even the beasts around them.

- 24 The hand of the diligent bears rule:
but sloth shall be under tribute.

24 The hand of the diligent shall bear rule; but the slothful shall be under tribute.

"*Diligent;*" from a root meaning *to cut*. Hence the sense of something *incisive* or *decided*. The primary idea is *promptness* or *determination*. "*Sloth;*" primarily *remissness*, or what is *indecisive*. In this world, "*diligence*" puts a man at the lead. In the eternal world, it will have made a man a king, and made all hell, and of course all "*sloth, under tribute*" to him.

We ought to begin this king-character in this world:—

- 25 Is there anxiety in the heart of a man, let
him subdue it:
and let a good word cheer it away.

25 Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.

Not "*heaviness*" (E. V.), but "*anxiety*." This last is the fashion of most griefs. We are bound to conquer it. The *determined* man is just the character to do it. "*Anxiety*" discredits faith. "*A good word;*" and such words are plenty in this very book, should *gladden it*, as the expression is; or, as a freer translation, "*cheer it away.*" It is a sin for men to be dejected. It is a great folly, too; for it broods over half their lives. Our passage tells all this, and tells the mode to dissipate it. It was the mode of Christ, when He quelled the foul fiend. The sword of the Spirit is the "*word*" of God (Eph. 6:17).

A righteous man will not only do this for himself, but for his neighbor; and help him, not only by "*word,*" but act:—

- 26 A righteous man guides his neighbour:
but the way of the wicked leads their own
selves astray.

26 The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked seduceth them.

Another meaning, strangely balanced in its probability, we should decidedly prefer, but for the agreement of this with the last clause. The English gives us some inkling of it. "*The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor.*" There are, in fact, two verbs, neither of which would be exactly in shape, and either of which would make sense. Both of them have been

adopted respectively by different commentators. One of them would mean in this text to *be more excellent than* (E. V.), or to *make gain from*, according as we might prefer the sense. The other would mean to *guide*, just as we have above translated. We were struck with the former meaning:—" *The righteous man makes gain of his neighbor;*" supposing it to be illustrated by the 24th verse, and supposing it to embosom that fearful doctrine, that the lost are for the saved; or, rather, that if we are Christ's, all things are ours, and that the righteous man gains by his neighbor, whether that neighbor be lost or saved, or whatever be the style of the peculiar benefit. The last clause, however, which seems to allude to guidance, appears to favor the other rendering. In that view there will be the same climax we have often noticed (11:23). The "**righteous man guides his neighbor;**" the "**wicked**" man, not only does not guide his neighbor, but does not guide himself; and not only so, but, instead of guiding himself, actually "**leads**" himself "**astray.**" The ambiguity of the verse is greatly increased by the incidental fact, that the spelling, that brings out the translation, "*his neighbor,*" which appears above, will bring out equally well the translation "*from his neighbor*" (or *than his neighbor*, E. V.), according as one noun or another may be imagined to be present.

- 27** One cannot roast laziness as something he
has taken in the chase:
but a precious treasure of a man is a diligent one.

27 The slothful man
roasteth not that which
he took in hunting:
but the substance of a
diligent man is pre-
cious.

The impenitent, who wait for something to turn up, are the same type of lazy people as love hunting and fishing better than more regular labor. The Wise Man goes to the root and says, There are no such hunting gains in the spiritual world. He goes further. He seems to remind his reader that character is all that will be left for a man at the last. He seems to imply that man will bring home from his hunt nothing but "**his laziness,**" and would ask whether one can "**roast**" that like a quail or a duck. And though we start at such horrible absurdity, yet it brings out in keen light a very different possibility for

diligence. Diligence can be roasted. It earns for us an eternal heaven, and yet, for all it gets, it is itself our richest dainty. “One cannot roast laziness as something he has taken in the chase; but a precious treasure of a man is a diligent one.” It is tantalizing to come so near other and nearly as important renderings. Many see very plausibly a meaning like this:—“*The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting;*” (so far the E. V.), meaning that he is wasteful, and suffers what he has actually now, to run to loss; “but the substance of a common man” (making the distinction as in v. 14) “is precious” (that is, is made account of and kept) “by a man of diligence.” A sinner throws away treasures; a saint values the very smallest. This would be a fine sense if the verse before meant that the saint gains from his neighbor. *Per contra*, though, there are difficulties. “*The slothful man*” (E. V.), in the Hebrew, is the sloth or “laziness” itself. And that word is feminine, and must be the object rather than the subject of the verb. The meaning is, that sloth cannot be roasted and eaten, but diligence can. Sloth is itself an evil: diligence is a good: the diligent man is himself a treasure (see 10:4); and the next verse strikes upon the same thought less quaintly, and carries it further:—

- 28 In the path of righteousness is life :
and the way is a path, not a death.

²⁸ In the way of
righteousness is life;
and in the pathway
therof there is no
death.

“**Life;**” of course *eternal* life. It begins in this world, and in the very “**path**” of the righteous man. “**Righteousness,**” which is the very path of the righteous man, is itself eternal life: All men have a “**way**;” and this implies that all men have an end. All have an object before them, which they are pushing after in one great journey. The Psalmist had before announced (Ps. 1:6) that “the way of the ungodly shall perish;” that is, not only shall they not reach their end, but their very way shall die down, and perish. They shall cease to take an interest in it. But this passage goes deeper. It says, the path of the righteous is life itself; and then, contrasting them with the wicked, it says, “*their way is a path,*” i. e., it leads somewhere; and then implies, that all other ways are “a

death." These are striking truths. Immortality is a "*path*." It travels the ages. It begins among believers. It is itself its destiny. Impenitence is "*a death*." It travels nowhere. The very mind of the impenitent can announce no terminus for his way-worn tread.

CHAPTER XIII.

- 1 A wise son has listened to a father's discipline: but a scorner to no rebuke. *A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke.*

PIETY is the fruit of training. If a man is a believer, it is a sign he has had believing nurture; and, if "**a scorner**," it is a sign he has had "**no rebuke**." This is a text that expounds infant baptism, and reiterates the promise made to the training of a child. To treat it as in our English Version, is simply to evolve the truism, that *a wise son will hear instruction*; and might do very well, grammatically, if the verb were future, and not perfect. The idea is, "**a wise son has listened to a father's discipline**"; and embraces the solemn lesson, that Christians are not to be made without training. Of course, as the grammar of the case, the *heard*, or "*has listened to*," which is in the second clause, after a known Hebrew fashion is to be understood in the first.

- 2 Out of the fair earnings of the mouth of a man a good man will get his food: but the appetite of the faithless out of robbery. *2 A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth: but the soul of the transgressors shall eat violence.*

"**The mouth of a man**" in that *viva voce* country, as formerly in our Southern States, was the great instrument of a business man. He lived by giving orders. The mail conducts our business in our days. A *false lip* stood for all sorts of bad activity (Ec. 10:12). A good man will be satisfied to earn his living. The bad man, in some way or other, wants to steal it. But a-pace with this secular meaning, is one that concerns the saints. The good man expects to fight for heaven; the lost

man to get heaven by deceit. It is true, the tendencies might seem reversed. The good man hails a work done for him, and expects a ransom without money and without price. The bad man would intersperse some struggles of his own. But, in fact, the Christian, though saved by grace, works the more for it. And, in fact, the sinner, rejecting grace, and interposing his own works, is just the man expecting blessing without cost, and without any earnest toil. Not "*eat good*" (E. V.), but "**a good man will eat**" ("*get his food*.") Several texts (see Class VII.) are cleared by such an inversion. "**Fair earnings;**" literally, *fruit* (E. V.). "**Appetite;**" literally, "*soul*" (E. V.) (but see 27 : 9). "**Out of**" in the second clause, requires מִפְרַי of the first clause to be understood. "*The earnings of the mouth.*" No one can go into a great city now, without noticing how much of men's money they make by their mouth. The gainful merchants are talking all day long. No man can buy salvation; but he reaches it by hard labor; and partly by earnest speech.

Speech, though our great activity, gives us more toil in holding it back, than in actually employing it. So activity, which it typically represents, is harder to hold, than to promote:—

3 He that sets watch over his mouth, stands
guard over his soul:
but he that sets wide his lips, it is ruin to
him.

³ He that keepeth
his mouth keepeth his
life: but he that open-
eth wide his lips shall
have destruction.

Religion is an every day battle. He that is not conscious of it, has no true religion. "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14 : 27). He that resists sin, is both proving and increasing his principle of grace. Whereas "**he that sets wide his lips,**" which means in Eastern imagery, he that gives loose to his vagrant acts, is not only not **guarding his soul**, but is actually creating "**ruin.**"

"The soul," therefore, is the thing to be considered. "**The sluggard,**" in a spiritual sense, may be a great man of business. Nay, a "*sluggard*," in any sense, may stumble upon wealth. But, as to the soul, the picture is altogether different:—

- 4 The sluggard longs, but as to his soul has nothing;
but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.
- 4 The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

Doddridge says, Most people perish by laziness. Laziness is the attribute of a man, who desires an object, but will not work for it. The impenitent desires heaven, nay longs for it—yea, confidently expects it (just as many a sluggard expects wealth), but religion never “turns up;” it never comes like game taken in the chase (12:27): it is a solid product: we must stir up ourselves to take hold on God (Is. 64:7). With no exceptions, such as are on ‘Change, it is the “*diligent soul*” that **“shall be made fat;”** and the *yearning sluggard*, at the very last, **“has nothing.”**

Though, therefore, the darkness hates the light, (Jo. 3:20), and this spiritual slaggardism hates the spiritually diligent, yet, in the end, the shame and the aversion shall turn the other way:—

- 5 A deceiving business hates the righteous man,
but also shames and disgraces the wicked.
- 5 A righteous man hateth lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.

Building up wealth and—having nothing (vs. 2, 4) is certainly **“a deceiving business.”** Such a business **“hates the righteous man,”** not in himself, but because he reproves it. The darkness hates the light, not in itself, but “lest its deeds should be reprobated” (Jo. 3:20). “So the carnal mind is enmity against God,” not in Himself, but “because it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed, can be” (Rom. 8:7; see also Jo. 7:7). But **a deceiving business**, when it comes to an eternal destiny, hate what it may in its earthly lot, must, in the end, turn its hate upon itself. It may **hate the righteous man;** but will **also shame and disgrace the wicked.**

- 6 Righteousness keeps guard over him that is of integrity in his way:
but wickedness subverts the Sin-Offering.
- 6 Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner.

“**Righteousness;**” that better character which pardon gives

some of the creatures. Our "righteousness" comes to us as the work of Christ. The beginning of our promised righteousness is faith and new obedience. Therefore, if one is obedient, or as this verse expresses it, "*is of integrity in his way.*" "*righteousness keeps guard over him.*" Righteousness is a breast-plate. Having the proof of our righteousness now, that righteousness or better condition of heart shall "*guard*" us further; while sin, becoming equally progressive, does not only not "*guard*" us, but (another intensive second clause) rejects what guard we have; that is, as it is most evangelically expressed, "*subverts*," or *overturns*, "**the Sin-Offering!**" This word "*sin-offering*," instead of *allowing* such an interpretation, *has* it in all preceding books. "*Sin*" (E. V.) is the rare rendering. Some of the most beautiful Scriptures, that are Messianic in their cast (Gen. 4:7), are ruined by the translation "*sin*" (E. V.). Leviticus never has the translation "*sin*" even in the English Version. And this book, "*Proverbs*," scarce ever ought to have it (see Class XLIII.), as will be seen as we advance in its discoveries.

If "*wickedness subverts the Sin-Offering*," a man may be in fortune, "*rich*," but, "*in soul*," (vs. 2, 4) exceeding "*poor*":—

7 There is that makes himself rich, and is all
nothing.

There is that makes himself poor, and is a
great treasure.

7 There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.

The text is terse beyond expression. Such are all these Proverbs. We cannot translate them. Making oneself rich may be itself the poverty, and making oneself poor may be itself the wealth; inasmuch as these acts may have been sins or graces of the soul, which enter by the Providence of Heaven into the very condition of the spirit. The meaning is, that outward circumstances are nothing in the question. A saint is poor or rich, as is most useful for him. The treasure is himself. "**There is that makes himself rich, and is all nothing;**" because himself, not the wealth, is the important matter. On the other hand, "**There is that makes himself poor,**" and not only "*hath great riches*," which is the imperfect translation of our Bibles,
8*

but “**is a great treasure.**” He himself, bereft of wealth, is all the greater for what God may have assigned.

Solomon, moreover, now expounds more specially :—

- 8 The ransom of a man's soul is his wealth; | 8 The ransom of a
and a poor man is he who has not listened | man's life are his rich-
to rebuke. | es: but the poor hear-
eth not rebuke.

“**Ransom;**” *covering*; i. e., *the covering of his guilt*. Property is a mere incident. A man's true opulence is his eternal redemption. He is not “poor” who is pinched by want, but he “**who has not listened to rebuke;**” which is the account the first verse gives of the man never converted.

Wealth, however, is not the best figure of righteousness. It is a “**light.**” Wickedness may have a “**lamp,**” and may feed its rays with temporary provision, that it may cheat. But *permanently*, how great the difference !—

- 9 The light of the righteous shall rejoice; | 9 The light of the
but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out. | righteous rejoiceth:
| but the lamp of the
| wicked shall be put out.

They may not always “rejoice,” but their “**light**” will. “**The lamp of the wicked**” shines upon its own transitoriness. They never say that it will last. They know that it “**shall be put out.**” This is rather a dismal provision for its being very cheerful. But “**the light of the righteous,**” however much they look at it, “**shall rejoice.**” The more they try it, the more it burns. It does not shine upon its own lack of oil. And, though they are not self-luminous, yet their “**light**” is; for it is the light of the Spirit, and it shines more and more through eternal ages.

If we recognized these things there would be no strife with our Maker :—

- 10 Only by pride comes quarrel; | 10 Only by pride
but with those that take advice is wisdom. | cometh contention;
| but with the well-ad-
vised is wisdom.

If men, when injured, paused, and **took advice**, and digested the apparent difficulties, how many **quarrels** need really take place in the world? And as to the great “**quarrel**” with God,

which needs the רָפֵךְ ("ransom," v. 8), and which is mended by the תִּקְדַּשׁ ("righteousness" v. 6), how long would that last, if we abandoned "pride?" He that has learned his guilt, and has accepted Counsel, need have no fear of a "quarrel" with his Maker.

The "wealth," however, that this chapter has described (v. 7), will not bear hoarding. Few properties of any kind that will!—

- 11 Wealth dwindleth faster than the breath; but he that keeps gathering on the hand increases.

11 Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.

"It is easier to make a fortune than to keep it." So say the worldly. Specially forbidden is the keeping of the bread of heaven (Ex. 16:19). It was to be gathered every morning. A man who "keeps gathering on the hand," is the man to stay rich. But the saint, who hoards up the past, and lives upon the fortune that he had, is the Israelite who kept the manna, and who found that it "bred worms and stank." Even happiness is not promoted by over-guard. "Things won are done; joy's soul lies in the doing." "Not that I had already attained, or were already perfect; but I follow after, if so be I may apprehend that, for which also I am apprehended of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:12) Continuing to work not only keeps wealth, but "increases" it; most particularly spiritual wealth. "He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly." We are to work all the time; for so "an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:11).

But not only depending upon the past is to be avoided. Depending upon the future is just as fatal:—

- 12 Protracted delay enfeebles the heart; but the desire arrived at is a tree of life.

12 Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.

"Protracted;" drawn out, and, therefore, prolonged. "Delay." The verb primarily, perhaps, means, to turn round; then, to

twist; then, *to twist or writhe with pain*; then, to *wait* or “*delay* ;” finally, to *hope* or *expect*. In this text, it means that procrastination or “*delay*,” which involves *hope*, and breeds the *expectation* that we will set to work hereafter. “**Enfeebles** ;” primarily, *smoothes*, *polishes*, or *wears down* ; hence, to weaken; hence, to *disease* or *make sick*. The Proverb means that a “*protracted delay*” of an intended purpose *weakens* or *exhausts* “**the heart** ;” but that “**the desire arrived at is a tree of life**.” The fourth verse has said that, “*the sluggard longs (or desires ; this very word), but, as to his soul, has nothing*.” This verse declares, that that longing, accompanied with procrastination, “*enfeebles the heart* ;” but that a bold plunging after the good, and attaining it, is a tree of life. This, dimly, is true in worldly affairs. A man who desires some earthly good and wavers, *enfeebles his heart* ; but he who will dash boldly in, strengthens it. “*Tree of life* ;” that which, partaken of, breeds immortality. The least *taste* of *arrived at desire*, in the spiritual world, like the apples of Eden, breeds “*life*.” The soul may go on after that eternally.

Such are the views of procrastination found in the nature of things. But the nature of things is nothing more than the nature of the Almighty. The fact that “*delay enfeebles the heart*” is an ordering of justice; and in that view of the matter, it is to be expressed by our being brought more and more under its claims :—

13 He that despises the word is bound by it ; but he that fears the law, as so doing shall be made whole.

¹³ Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed : but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.

“**The word**” means God’s *word*, or the *law*. “**The law**” (2d clause) is that word, “*commandment*” (E. V.) (as it is generally translated); more properly “*law*,” however; the usual *law* of the English Version being rendered better “*a direction*” (see remarks on Chap. 1 : 8). The more we *despise* the “*law*,” the more we are “*bound by it*.” “**But he that fears the law**.” This is a splendid picture of the Christian. He is not one that *keeps* the *law*, but “*fears*” it, i. e., tries to keep it—fears it with a godly fear; and, as a climax, frequent in a second

clause (see 14:11 and *passim*), he is not one who simply comes less under bonds, but is forgiven altogether. He is “**made whole**.” That is, his standing under the law is made one of *entireness*. In court he is all right. He that puts off the claim, puts it on more sadly. He that “*fears*” it, in the right sense of that fear, puts it off altogether. “**As so doing;**” a frequent force of the pronoun when expressed. The *fear of the law* is not only the *condition*, but the most essential *nature*, of the gift of being made whole. “**Is bound.**” Our Bible says “*shall be destroyed.*” But the sense of the verb originally is to *twist*; hence, to *bind*; hence, substantively, a *cord*. Where the primary meaning is so much the most in place, one can be at no loss to choose it. The less we have to do with God’s “*word*,” the more it has to do with us.

But, alas! the “*delay*” (v. 12) of the lost man is natural. It is hard to get out of the grip of procrastination. There is that in sin to make it “*perpetual*.” This is declared in the 15th verse. But, in the 14th, an instrumental remedy is suggested, in getting the help of those already wise:—

14 The direction of a wise man is a burrowing out place of life,

for getting away out of the snares of death.

15 Good intelligence gives grace; but the way of the faithless is perpetual.

¹⁴ The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

¹⁵ Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of the transgressors is hard.

“**Burrowing out place;**” nearly always (*alibi*) “*a fountain*” (E. V.); but meaning “*a fountain*,” because a fountain is a *place dug out*. The substantive is derived from a verb to *dig*. Compounded with **to**, it suggests a *place* (see force of **to**, 4:23). A primary meaning would be a *dug out place*. The jarring metaphors in the usual translation led us to go searching the primaries. In our usual version it stands, “*The law of the wise is a fountain of life.*” All very good. But then let us go further:—“*to depart from the snares of death.*” What rhyme or reason is there in such a picture? A *fountain*, as the means to *depart!* and then, to *depart from snares!* We long puzzled over this in vain. There is another instance of it (see 14:27). We resorted to the roots. This redeems many hazy passages (see Class XXIX.). The strict primaries would mean about

thus,—“*The direction of the wise man is a dug place of life for departing from the snares of death.*” Now imagine a snare that can be *dug out* of, if an animal has the means, and you have the genesis of our adopted translation. “**The direction of a wise man is a burrowing out place of life, for getting away out of the snares of death.**” “Direction;” that word “*law*” (E. V.) but recently (v. 13) adverted to. *Commandment* is what we have been reading (E. V.) for graver *law*. “**Snares.**” If “*the word*” (v. 13) gripes us the more we “*delay*” (v. 12), then, signally, it is a *snare “of death.”* If a man, therefore, is a procrastinating sinner, let him call in the help of the pious, that is, (in all ways) of the church, that they may help him to *burrow out*. V. 15. But, alas! the pious are but an instrument. “We are born not of the will of man” (Jo. 1:13). The only saving thing is *light*. An actual rising to the light is a burrowing out from the snare. As the Wise Man expresses it,—“**Good intelligence gives grace.**” The least spark of spiritual intelligence is the condition of salvation. There is no help for the sinner but in this saving miracle; for otherwise sin holds on:—“**the way of the faithless is perpetual.**” There has been great strife about this passage. We have reached our rendering through the chief word. We find it in thirteen places; and in every one of them it means “*perpetual.*” “*Strong* is thy dwelling-place” (E. V.) (Num. 24:21); evidently, “*perpetual.*” “*Mighty rivers*” (E. V., Ps. 74:15) are “*perpetual (or perennial) rivers,*” “*Mighty nation*” (E. V., Jer. 5:15) corresponds with next expression, “*ancient nation*” (E. V.), and is to be rendered “*perpetual*” (or permanent). Not “righteousness as a mighty stream” (E. V., Amos 5:24), but “as a *perpetual stream.*” Maurer gets the meaning “*cruel*” through the idea *strong*, which we see (though a mistake) in other passages. Winer, “*pertinacious*,” from *perpetually holding on.* So Rosenmüller, De Wette and Ewald. Gesenius, “*a perennial river,*” from the same idea of being *perpetual*. The Vulgate, “*vorago.*” Umbreit, a “*marsh,*” still from being *perpetual*. Why not translate “*perpetual*” at once? We know no passage of so admirable a sense, where men seem to have shunned so the simplest meaning. *Light*, only, will secure a man “*grace*” in the way of a condition. Sin, as

of its nature, sinks always lower under bond (v. 13), and must, therefore, *de jure*, be "*perpetual*." For, strange enough, the man without "*good* intelligence," i. e., the best kind of knowledge, neglects to act on what sort of knowledge he has. The worst man has knowledge enough to save him; that is, (to expound an averment which is only in one sense true), God's goodness is such, that, if a man would use the light he had, he would start from that point, and be helped into the kingdom.

But:—

- 16 Every subtle man acts as he knows;
but the stupid acts out folly.

|
¹⁶ Every prudent
man dealeth with
knowledge: but a fool
layeth open his folly.

"**Subtle**;" one of Solomon's words for *pious*, in agreement with chap. 1 : 4. "**Acts**;" this in the two clauses is different. One verb employs a preposition so as to mean "*acts by*"—"acts by *knowledge*." The other is without a preposition, and means *spreads* or *acts forth*. The roots are quite diverse. "*Acts out folly*." Of course, if he does not use the light he has, he knowingly "*acts out folly*." Then it is double distilled "*folly*." This is the condition of the sinner.

Now, as every man is a "*messenger*," and has an "*errand*," and that is as a "*witness*" for God (see 14 : 25), how can such a "*witness*" hope to be tolerated, or to continue among the happy?—

- 17 A wicked messenger falls as being an evil;
but a faithful errand-man is health.

|
¹⁷ A wicked messen-
ger falleth into mis-
chief: but a faithful
ambassador is health.

The word for "*messenger*" is the word for *angel*. How soon did the wicked *Angel* fall, when he became of no use? and men; how long do they tolerate a false messenger? "**As being an evil**." This is the ~~in~~ *essentia*, i. e., the preposition *in*, when it means likeness. "Surely every man walketh *in* an image" (Ps. 39 : 6); that is, "Surely every man walketh *as* an image" (see in this book, 3 : 26, and Is. 29 : 21; see also Class XXVI.). The soul sent out by the Almighty, if "*wicked*," "*shall fall as being an evil*" thing; but a soul that is "*faithful*," is needed, and will hold its place.

18 Poverty and shame is he who lets go discipline;
but he that watches reproof shall be honoured.

**18 Poverty and
shame shall be to him
that refuseth instruc-
tion; but he that re-
gardeth reproof shall be
honoured.**

"**He who lets go discipline;**" that is, does not resort to the good (v. 14), and does not seek light (v. 15) when God presses it on him, to wit, when he is made the subject of "*discipline*," is not only "*an evil*" (v. 17), but the most despicable form of it. He is himself "**poverty and shame.**" This is another reason for casting him out of life. "*He who lets go;*" as though men, lost, were sluggards (v. 4), and were meaning to hold on to discipline, but were lazily *letting go*. Such men are "*poverty*" itself. But *excellence*, and that degree of *ornament* that shall make him acceptable in heaven, is he who holds on to correction. For "**He that watches reproof shall be honored.**"

19 A desire that has sprung up, is sweet to the soul;
but it is abomination to the stupid to turn away from evil.

**19 The desire accom-
plished is sweet to the
soul; but it is abom-
ination to fools to de-
part from evil.**

A sinner can get on comparatively well when a pious "**desire**" has been once enkindled. What is said of the lips of the Strange Woman dropping honey (5:3), is true also in this case. The soul is so near the sinner, that if there is anything sweet to it, it is easy to follow it on. "**A desire that has sprung up, is sweet to the soul.**" The soul, once converted, and conceiving its first desire, may follow it afterward. And, therefore, the Psalmist begs us (Ps. 34:8) to "taste and see," that we may have this first desire. But the *unturned*, that is, the unconverted man, finds it loathsome to take the first step. His desires that have "*come to be*," are of another nature. How can a man will when unwilling? *C'est le premier pas qui coûte.* "**It is abomination to the stupid to turn away from evil.**" Most commentators translate:—"The desire accomplished" (E. V.). But the word is the Niphal of the verb *to be*. The idea *to be* is usually not written (see Gen. 2:11). It is expressed by a collocation of substantives. When the verb is written, it means *come to be*. It is translated (Gen. 11:2),

"came to pass." So "let light come to be; and light came to be" (Gen. 1:3). And "evening came and morning came, the first day" (Gen. 1:5). So this Niphal does not mean "*accomplished*," as another verb does in chap. 13:12; but it means, that *arises*, or has *come to be*; and it teaches that a *kindled desire* is so sweet, that we wonder that we did not have it earlier. We yield to it now with pleasure; while the wicked, who has other sweet desires, finds it "*an abomination*" to "*turn*" into the path of safety.

We never will get the good "*desire*," if we keep out among the wicked:—

20 He that goes with the wise, shall be also ²⁰ He that walketh
wise; with wise *men* shall be
but the companion of fools shall do badly. *wise*: but a companion
of fools shall be de-
stroyed.

—in all degrees; first of all, in the highest. In heathen lands, all are fools; and, therefore, all are *companions of fools*, and all "**do badly**." In Christian lands piety is in circles and families, and moves in lines. The mutual influences are immense. A noble way to be "**wise**" is, to go boldly among the good; confess Christ; and ask their influence and prayers,

The more is this necessary, because the devil will not let us rest. "**Evil**" is rapacious in its gains:—

21 Evil shall pursue sinners; ²¹ Evil pursueth sin-
but good shall perfect the righteous. *ners*: but to the right-
eous good shall be re-
paid.

Each inch "*evil*" holds. It never lets back any advance. It is versatile to tempt, and ruins with many instruments. While the good, however, have just the opposite lot. They gain by every advance. All things work together to make them blessed. And each act that is holy in their lives, helps toward better acts and higher holiness on through their whole probation. Then, eternally! The pit is bottomless. "**Evil shall pursue sinners.**" It will never cease to hound them, and make them worse. But "**good**" shall keep on shaping the righteous. "**Perfect;**" often *reward*, or *repay* (E. V.). But that is a more advanced significance. The original is, to *make whole* (see a few sentences back v. 13). *Complete*, therefore, or *make more entire*, is a suitable sense for what "*good*" is

always doing for the “*righteous*.” Evil dogs the dead sinner; but good *perfects* the living one.

Not only so, but he “*sends down*” goodness to his “*children*” :—

- 22** A good man sends down a heritage to children's children;
but the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the righteous.

22 A good man leav-
eth an inheritance to
his children's children ;
and the wealth of the
sinner is laid up for the
just.

This is the direct promise of heaven (Ps. 103:17; Prov. 22:6). That it ever fails, must be by palpable neglect. A man may be saved himself, and lose his children; but the Bible speaks of this as the parents' fault (1 Sam. 3:13; Prov. 13:24), and brands it as the great curse upon the earth (Mal. 4:6). While the “*sinner*,” not only can not *send down* his “*wealth*,” but cannot himself possess it. It is a curse to him. It will be used for the saints (Matt. 25:28): “*the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the righteous*.”

Why is the sinner so contented then? The next Proverb explains it. He has found the life of his hands; therefore he is not grieved (Is. 57:10):—

- 23** Much to eat is the light of the poor;
but there is that is swept away as not

23 Much food is in
the tillage of the poor :
but there is that is
destroyed for want of
judgment.

That is, *plenty to live on*; as Isaiah (57:10) calls it, “*the life of (one's) hands*,” “*is the light of the poor*” sinner. He is getting along at the moment. If it would last, it might be a poor lantern any length of time; but the misery is, it must be “*swept away*.” The poor present cannot last, but, worse still, must be given account of; and the reason it cannot last is told most tersely in the closing syllables:—“*as not a judgment* ;” another instance of the \sqcap *essentia*. “*Judgment* ;” an award of court. The sinner's *eating* is “*not a judgment* ;” i. e., it is not adjudged to him. The feasts of this world are another man's (Luke 16:12). They are the “*unrighteous mammon*.” They are the “*light*” of the poor sinner; but, alas! they are to be “*swept away*” as never legally awarded.*

* Before conceiving this sense, we had adopted another. It was partly the common ver-

A good man, having the chance to send blessings to his offspring (v. 22), must take care to avail of it by careful "discipline." "*Plenty to eat*" (v. 23) is not provision enough for one's children :—

24 He who spares his rod, hates his son ; but he who loves him, is earnest after him with discipline.

²⁴ He that spareth his rod hateth his son : but he that loveth him chasteneth him ~~be-~~ times.

"*Seeks him*," the literal word is. "*Seeks for him discipline*" it might seem to mean. But as this (if the meaning) could have been easily expressed, we have preferred the wording as it is, viz., "*seeks him earnestly as to discipline*." "**H**e who loves his son" will not let him drift, believing that the gospel will set him right; but will "*seek him earnestly*." We are "born not of blood" (Jo. 1:13); and he who looks for a blood inheritance for his children, will be wofully deceived. It is our "*work*"

sion. It had great difficulties. נָרַג seldom means "*ploughed-land*" ("*tillage*," E. V.); and, moreover, it has no preceding preposition. "*In*" (E. V.) is in Italics. As the passage is a difficult one, and can be more fairly judged if both comments are given, we will print our previous comment in this note. It was written before discovering the other :—

Recurring to the former verse (v. 22), there is great "*wealth*" even with the ungodly. Christ's offer is "*wealth*."—V. 23. "*Much food is in the ploughed land of the poor, but there is that is ground down for lack of judgment.*" This is evidenced in worldly husbandry. Much is seen to be produced by the poor man. His toil is the basis of everything. The *pick* has moved the world. But the poor man lacks capital. The wealthy have him under restraint; and, though the complaint is often, in certain forms, unjust, yet "*there is that is ground down for lack of judgment.*"—"Ploughed land," *land newly broken*. "*In* the ploughed land." The word "*in*" is not present. We might translate,—"Much food is the ploughed land of the poor." That is, his work, if he could concentrate it on himself, has much money in it. "*Judgment*," the word that means a judicial decision. If he had men that would pay him according to an equitable "*judgment*," he would not be "*ground down*" (literally, *scraped*) as he is. Yet we did not translate it *justice*, because, though it would prevent the equivoque which makes it sound like *sense*, as though the poor were destroyed for lack of sound judgment, there is a spiritual meaning, which the word, as it stands, is necessary to convey. Glorious things are in the "*ploughed land*" of the sinner. All things that the saints have in heaven, he has a chance for just as they. If he "*reap thorns*," he will have "*sown wheat*" (Jer. 12:13). He has a superb intellect. He is made in the image of God. He is destined to immortality. He has the offer of the gospel. "*Much food is in the ploughed land of the poor.*" But, alas! He never reaps. Why? He lacks *judgment*; that "*judgment*" which Isaiah speaks of, that was to be brought forth to the nations (Is. 42:1); that "*judgment*" which was the "*bruised reed*" that Christ would take care not to "*break*" (Is. 42:3); that judicial decision, made upon the merit of the Redeemer, which is spoken of in the 6th verse, and which is the only thing which can keep the poor man from wasting all his immortality.

that is to be "rewarded" (Jer. 31:16); and that not of the more genial kind at all times, but painful and severe.

But these severities, pursued long enough, produce in the end pleasures like "*plenty to eat*" (v. 23). Indeed, the "*much to eat*" (v. 23) transfers itself really to the side of the believer:—

- 25 The righteous eats so that he satisfies his 25 The righteous eat-
eth to the satisfying of
his soul: but the belly
of the wicked shall
want.
appetite;
but the belly of the wicked wants.

One of the confidences of the wicked is, that he, at least, has his pleasure in this world. The inspired Solomon denies it. He himself has left us an experience (Ec. 1). "**The righteous eats so that he satisfies his appetite.**" That is, he seeks righteousness and peace, and these things do satisfy him; he seeks them not as the world does, under a mistake, but for what they really are; he seeks them more and more as he knows them better, and shall be seeking them, and enjoying them through eternal ages. "**But the wicked,**" even in his "*belly*," "*wants*." His delights, even of the more carnal sort, are not to be directly gazed at. If they are, they vanish. He cannot trust himself to theorize over any solid pleasures. So hollow are they, that he would not live over again the history of the past; and so poor, that he grows tired of enjoying them. If a man drinks of the water that they give, he thirsts again; but if he drinks of the water that Christ shall give him, he shall never thirst. For the water that Christ shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life (Jo. 4:14).

CHAPTER XIV.

IF a good man can make a heritage descend far, and a lost man cannot, but only lays up profit for the just (13:22), it is very pertinent to give direction to the good man, *how* he is to make good descend far, i. e., by discipline (13:24); and it is very pertinent, further, to state the agency of *women* in this result. How much have women done for the perpetuity of the "*house!*"—

1 The Wise Woman has built her house;
and Folly tears it down with her hands.

EVERY wise woman
buildeth her house:
but the foolish pluck-
eth it down with her
hands.

The literal reading here would be, “*The wisdoms of women has built her house.*” “*Wisdoms*” is plural, and, therefore, has been thought an adjective. In this case, the singular verb may imply *each one*, as in Nahum 3:7:—“*Wise women, each one, has built her house.*” So Rosenmüller. *Wisdom*, however, has the precedent of chap. 1:20, and 9:1 for being in the plural, and for having a singular verb, and also for being personified as a “*woman*,” and possibly might assimilate also to itself, in the same swollen speech, “*woman*” in the plural. The translation, then, might be, simply “*Wisdom.*” As this would be bold, however, it may be better to treat the Proverb as at base literal, with the usual advance to the more allegoric sense. “*House*” means *all interests*. “*Has built*” is preterite.” If all interests are prosperous at present, it has been the work of the past. “*Wisdom in women*” (i. e., the mothers of the house) “*has built*” it. The second clause wisely returns to the future, which is the common tense in all these Proverbs, and which we always translate as the present, because the act is steadily running on, and includes both the present and the future. It is a state of present fact. *Wisdom in women has built her house*, beginning a long time ago; but “*Folly*” in women is an affair of the present. If it had been at work long, it would have had no “*house*” to pull down. As entering upon the work of the wise, ungodly mothers *tear down* the “*house*,” which generations of the righteous have been slowly building. The grand comment, however, is, that this Womanly Wisdom or Wise Woman, like the Woman of Grace (11:16), or Woman of Folly (9:13), has an allegoric meaning. Women do much toward building up. But this text means more; that Wisdom, as personified, is the only builder of a “*house*,” and “*Folly*,” as Impenitence, all that can pull it down.

That Folly can be so mad as to tear down all her own interests, and to do it habitually, and to do it confessing that it is done, is illustrated further by this strange peculiarity:—

² He that walks in His level track fears Je-hovah ;
but he that is turned out of His way despises Him.

² He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord : but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.

A man walking over a field, has a certain "level" course (if there be such) that he naturally follows. If he walk not *level*, or if he turn constantly out of his way, men think him either drunk or mad. It is this reasonable instinct of our nature that our text embodies. "Level track;" literally, "*levelness*." "He that walks in his *levelness*." We do not say, "*uprightness*" (E. V.), as that word usually is translated; for "*levelness*" agrees with the idea of walking. Such meaning is, that Folly is self-condemned; that if a man would put one foot before another, or mentally move as he himself thinks level and right, he would practically *fear* God; but that he drops out of his own "*way*," and walks brokenly, and with change of gait; and that it is only these drunken staggerers that can be found practically to *despise* Jehovah. "*Fears*;" not *loves*; not *reverences*. It is careless to define *fear* to be anything but *fear* itself. A holy *fear*, however, is not terror; and, yet, a *being afraid*, more really, and more tremblingly often, than the sinner. It is remarkable that when men have escaped wrath, they begin most healthily to *fear* it; and when men are faithless even to their own ways, they despise the most the law of the Almighty. This text, like many another, is pregnant. Pregnant texts, as we have usually observed (10:1; 23:3), are ambidextrous; and the alternative meanings, though distinct, are mutually embracing. We have depicted one sense; but another is grammatical, and equivalent in thought. It would read "*His*" *levelness* and "*His*" *ways*, referring to Jehovah. It would read, in fact, as before, bating the capitals. It would mean, *he that walks in God's level track, fears Him; but he that is turned out of God's way*, that is, becomes *alien* like the Strange Woman; *he that has got out of the line for which he was made*; instead of fearing, as he naturally might, chooses that horrid moment for despising God. We would rank this higher than an ambiguity; for God's ways and man's ways, when they are *levelnesses*, and suited to our

step, are the same blessed track; for we are created in the image of God.

Walking but increases this disposition to *despise* :—

- 3 The mouth of a fool is a sceptre of pride ; | 3 In the mouth of the
but the lips of the wise shall guard them. foolish is a rod of pride:
but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.

Solomon turns easily from the feet to the “*lips*.” The “*lips*” are the more favorite emblem. The “*mouth*” is the great word in Proverbs for our whole earthly agency. This agency is a *rod* (E. V.). A “*rod*” with all the commentators means a scourge. This would mean that the conduct of a wicked man in the end scourges his “*pride*;” which, for the first clause, would be a very sufficient meaning. But the second clause means, that the conduct of the righteous man is a “*guard*” to him; which would be no very handsome balance to the thought of the clause before. The word translated “*rod*” (E. V.) is the favorite emblem for sovereignty (Ex. 4: 20; 22: 8). The savage chieftain had a club. From this rude stick grew the carved “*sceptre*.” It was the emblem of control. The *rod of Aaron* was his power. “*Thy rod*” (Ps. 23: 4); videlicet, “*thy sovereignty*.” “The Lord shall send the *rod of thy strength* out of Zion (Ps. 110: 2),” i. e., thy *power* from out thy church; meaning that Christ shall use His church for His triumphs of power. A “*rod*” or “*sceptre of pride*,” therefore, is a sceptre that pride wields, or imagines she does. And the text, as a whole, means that “*in the mouth of a fool*” (or *in essentiæ*) “*the mouth of a fool*” (that is, his conduct) “*is a sceptre of pride* ;” that is, a fool’s life-work or energy is his sovereignty, that is, the “*sceptre*,” by which he would carve his way. But it is “*a sceptre of pride*.” His kingship is a notion of pride. “*The mouth*” or work of *a fool* is a great swollen kingship or “*sceptre of pride* ;” “*but the lips of the wise*” do really win, and do really govern. “*In the mouth of a fool is a sceptre*,” but it is pride’s sceptre, a horrid deceit; “*but the lips of the wise*” have a true sceptre; that is, “*the lips of the wise shall (really) guard them*.”

The maze of Oriental imagery winds every where, and exhibits next this bucolic riddle :—

- 4 Where no oxen are, the stable is clean;
but there is great profit in the strength of
an ox.

4 Where no oxen
are, the crib is clean:
but much increase is
by the strength of the
ox.

If the lips are so dangerous; that is, if men's activity may so bind them in their sin, better remain at rest. No! says the Wise Man. The expense of worldly business is frightful; but, then, without business, the world can not go on. All a man does, is but a sceptre of death, if he be a fool; but, something a man must do, or he is lost at any rate. Alas! for the poor sinner! If he acts, he perishes. If he does not act, he is sure to perish. Monasteries and caves of the saints cannot save us. If we are idle, corruption enters there; if we are active, it presses that way. The only remedy is the forth-right course; to take our lives in our hands, and push boldly toward the light of the believer.

This light is everything:—

- 5 He who witnesses things correctly, does
not lie;
but, of a deceived witness, the very breath
is lies.

5 A faithful witness
will not lie: but a false
witness will utter lies.

The man, *not walking in his levelness* (see v. 2), shows by his staggering that he does not **witness things correctly**. Here the whole is shifted to the “*Lips*” (as v. 3). The grand truth is broached that the man who *lies* does not see correctly. This is a universal doctrine. Moreover, “*lies*” stand for all sin; just as “*Lips*” stand for all agency. All sin, therefore, flows from being “*deceived*.” The English Version gives a most tautological sense. The real meaning is; first, a man not “*deceived*” will never sin; second, a man “*deceived*” will sin perpetually, like his “*very breath*.” *A deep moral blindness is the source and measure of all possible transgression.* We must look sharply at this Hebrew, for it will occur again (v. 25; 19:5, 9). Several Proverbs depend for their significance upon this meaning,—a “*deceived*,” rather than a *deceiving*, “*witness*.”

We said under the 4th verse, that the lost man must strike for the light. But, alas! he does, sometimes, and fails:—

- 6 A scorner has sought wisdom, and there was no such thing; but knowledge is easy to him who has become discerning.

6 A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.

A page of Hebrew; what is it to a child? It is absolutely nothing. But the whole was easy to the Hebrew eye. “**A scorner has sought wisdom.**” Notice the past tense. Every “scorner” *has done* it. Take any impenitent man. We may be sure some day or other he has sought spiritual intelligence. But he has done it selfishly. Moreover, he has done it fitfully; and feebly. He has groped. He has made a sort of blind man’s pass for knowledge, and has come back with the averment, that **there is no such thing.** Light is *simple*; “*easy*;” literally, *light*, as opposed to *heavy*; light is *obvious*; nothing can be more so; but then, as the inspired man advises us, it is only “*easy*” to the “**discerning**” man.

But, while the fool makes out so badly the meaning of being wise, the wise make out the fool; and, what is wonderful, make out the wise, largely by witnessing the fool:—

- 7 Go from the presence of a stupid man; and thou shalt not know the lips of knowledge.

7 Go from the presence of a foolish man when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.

(How sadly this verse has lain concealed!) Sin is the great exegete. This was the wife of Satan. He told our parents,—then their eyes should be open; and they were. They did not know good till they had lost it. That is, in the broad universe good stands out by contrast. God is best known through Satan. Heaven will be most bright through Hell. And through all the ages of the blest, that tree in the garden will be “of the knowledge of good and evil,” and that by the very intention of the Most High.

Light, though, is not merely abstract light:—

- 8 The wisdom of the subtle is the making discernible of his way; but the folly of the stupid is delusion.

8 The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit.

We are not to infer, because “**Wisdom**” eludes the scorner.

that it is, therefore, something mystic. It fits earth so closely, that it actually carves our "**way**." Nay, more closely still, it is actually path-finding itself. She takes a man from her very gate, and tells him all that he must do. She not only discerns paths, but that is all of her: she does nothing else. "**The wisdom of the subtle is the making discernible of his way.**" While, on the other hand, "**the folly of the stupid is (its own) delusion.**"

All of us having a way, and all of us following it with the whole energy of our lives, "the excellency of knowledge is, that Wisdom giveth life to them that have it." Wisdom grasps its end; Folly never. Wisdom is a great Path Finder; Folly a "delusion." And the Wise Man, strangely lights up this, when he paints "**Sin**," after she has led a man to Hell, as turning back to mock him :—

- 9 Sin makes a mock at fools ; but between upright beings there is favor. | 9 Fools make a mock at sin : but among the righteous there is favour.

"**Makes a mock.**" This is singular, and agrees with "**sin**." Not *makes sport*, as a fool might, of engaging in his sins. A fool may *make sport* of sin, but hardly could be said to "*make a mock at*" it (E. V.). "**Sin makes a mock at fools;**" "**but between upright beings**" we cannot conceive of any mockery. The upright God, and the upright saint; the upright saint, and the upright Saviour; grace, and judgment; faith, and the scenes of the last day; between these, there must be *good-will*, i. e., mutual *delight* or "*favor*." So John (1 Jo. 4:17, 18), "*Herein does the love gain its end between us (that is, between God and us; see v. 16) that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.* There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth, is not made perfect in love."

It is true there is a great deal of "**bitterness**" in the Christian's life. **Knowledge itself**, when turned upon sin, is, in itself, a bitterness. "*In much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow*" (Ec. 1:18):—

- 10 A knowing heart is a bitterness to itself; |
but with its joy it does not hold inter- |
course as an enemy. |
10 The hea t know-
eth his own bitterness;
and a stranger doth not
intermeddle with his
joy.

We venture upon this translation. We find no spiritual sense in the one heretofore given. A Proverb is not a sentiment. I mean by that, the Proverbs of Solomon were the gospel of his day, and their ultimate sense must be religious. There seems no useful piety in the Proverb as usually given. But, in this dress, words take their more common meaning; the grammar is actually improved; and the sense is better in itself, and better as it stands connected. “**A knowing heart;**” i. e., a heart spiritually enlightened; “*is a bitterness to itself;*” literally, “*a bitterness of its soul.*” “**Soul**” for “*self*” is a constant usage of the Scriptures (see 21:23). “**But with its joy,**” viz., that budding joy that grows up under its sorrows; that is, the “*joy*” such as that of which the Christian has possession: “*it does not hold intercourse.*” This is the regular meaning of the verb. The Lexicons give, “*intermeddle*” (E. V.), only for this sole passage. Therein, too, they mar it. “**As an enemy:**” such as the impenitent’s “*joys*” are. Resuming the whole:—“*A knowing heart is a bitterness to itself;*” on the principle which Christ meant when he said, he “came not to send peace but a sword” (Matt. 10:34): “*but with its joy,*” weak as it may be, and small and easily clouded, “*it does not,*” as the impenitent do, “*hold intercourse as an enemy.*” His “*joy*” is like his “*bitterness,*” a friend; and all will work in opposite direction to the joy of the wicked.

“**The house of the wicked**” may be a most prosperous one, and may seem to be full of peace; but it is doomed. It must become “*desolate,*” literally, *astonished*; which is the Eastern way of describing grand downfalls. “**But the tent of the upright;**” that is (intensive second clause, 10:22) his slenderest possessions; like a sprout; like some poor tender plant, shall *bloom forth*. Such is the meaning of “*flourish:*”—

- 11 The house of the wicked shall be made |
desolate; |
but the tent of the upright shall flourish. |
11 The house of the
wicked shall be over-
thrown; but the taber-
nacle of the upright
shall flourish.

Religion, from its small beginnings, reveals *bitternesses* (v. 10), but, nevertheless, has *joys*. And those joys it need “not have intercourse with as with an enemy;” and they will grow and spread like a rooted plant.

The rich, being honest, and seeming to be wise, and aiming to support their house, can hardly feel how deceived they are; each step being so admirably right! Yet:—

- 12** There is a way that seems right unto a man;
but its afterpart is the ways of death. 12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Souls perish always with surprise. “**Seems**” is expressed by *before* or in the *presence of*. “They were both righteous before God (Lu. 1:6).” That is, He thought them so. “The righteous man falling down before the wicked” (Prov. 25:26), i. e., seeming to be a failure. But yet the *seeming* here noted must be taken *cum grano*. Deep in the lost heart is the knowledge of its “*end*” (v. 12, E. V.); “*after-part*,” rather. The word means, its *afterward*. The way lasts forever, and its *afterward* “**is the ways of death**.” Deep in the lost man’s heart he knows all this, and it makes a dark ground for his gayeties:—

- 13** Even in laughter a heart is sad; and joy, in its afterpart, is heaviness. 13 Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness.

Not of its own nature, of course; for a Proverb has already said (v. 10) that there is a “*joy*” which is not our foe. Not, this is always the case; but this is the case; that is, there is such a case. Men in the very pride of feasts are “**sad**” at “**heart**,” and the “*after-part*” of such “*joy*” is the very weight of “**heaviness**.”

Because, the wicked get nothing really but their “**ways**.” They are travelling; and they seek an end; and they confidently expect it; but they never get it. What they do get, therefore, is their journey. The old man has got about enough of travelling, but enough, if he be an impenitent man, of nothing else, in either world, whatever. The saint may have precious little on the earth, but he has made more than his own journey, and much even out of the impenitent man:—

14 The backslider in heart shall be satisfied
with his ways;
and the good man from him.

¹⁴ The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways; and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.

"The back-slider in heart." Not a Christian. A Christian indeed often backslides. Not, therefore, what our usage means, but a *heart sliding back*, as ever the lost heart does. The writer has but written a fresh name for an impenitent. Such a sliding heart will just have its journey at the last, and nothing for it. Even its joys will have sunk it backward. While the good shall have their own ten pounds in addition to the pound first received, they shall also have the pound of the wicked. This is sad doctrine. The lost have nothing. The saved have everything, including the lost. The lost have nothing but their journey through this world. The saved, in addition to all their other inheritances, will inherit the lost, and make eternally by these saddest lessons. "*Himself*" (E. V.) is grammatical, but, literally, not so true, and, doctrinally, not so rich as the other translation.

To this mad lot why do not the wicked demur? Because, says the Wise Man, these men that refuse to trust God, trust everything else implicitly:—

15 The simple trusts everything;
but the subtle must make it discernible
that he is going right.

¹⁵ The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.

16 The wise is afraid, and departs from evil:
but the stupid push on, and are confident.

¹⁶ A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.

Thing; primarily "*word*" (E. V.). By usage, however, it grew to mean also "*thing*" (Gen. 20:10). "**Make it discernible**;" a Hiphil. "*That he is going right*;" literally, *as to his straight going*. **The simple trusts everything**. As the next verse explains it, he **pushes on**, from a verb which means to *pass up* or *rush over*, like troops attacking a battery. He *pushes himself along*. The word is reflexive. While the "**subtle**," with a much profounder trust, and that for "*every thing*" too; insists upon seeing one thing; and that is a "**right**" path before him. "*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?* By

taking heed thereto according to Thy word." "Trust in the Lord and do good" (Ps. 37: 3). "Make smooth the planting-place of thy foot, and all thy ways shall be established firmly" (Prov. 4: 26). "*The simple*" go on in an overbearing, reckless way, as the waves roll forward over the deep; but "*the subtle*," while trusting just as much, does it wisely, taking that single thing *his steps*, and seeing that they secure a blessing. V. 16, "**The wise is afraid**," and that in the gospel sense (Acts 10: 2); not gloomily, like the sinner, but practically, so as to **depart from evil**. His fear passes into the watching of his feet; while the "**stupid**" (that is, *the fat*, originally) *bears himself ahead*, out of a *crass and bloated confidence*.

Still worse may be the very deliberate man. It is not all thinking that the book applauds, but that which is discriminate; the watching of our feet. The **deep-laid schemer** may be more hated of God than the more simple. It is so in worldly estimations:—

- 17** He that has quick passions, does foolishness; but the man of deep schemes is hated. | ¹⁷ *He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly; and a man of wicked devices is hated.*

"*He that is short, or cut off, of nostrils.*" The nostrils were the type of anger (Ps. 10: 4). The more hot-pulsed sinner may be lost; but the *deep-set* fool excels him in both guilt and danger. Alas! for the well-complexioned, coolly-settled, morally-esteemed, and long-established hypocritical professor!

- 18** The simple have inherited folly: but the subtle make a crown of knowledge. | ¹⁸ *The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.*

"**Inherited;**" that is, have it fastened upon them as a settled profession. "**Have inherited.**" These perfects, as we have lately said (14: 1), are to be noticed in their sense of having occurred already. "*Have inherited folly.*" That is; "**the simple**," who are here considered, are foolish now, and will have nothing else than folly for their eternal heritage. If the sinner shall have nothing but "*his ways*" (v. 14), surely we are but deepening the sense when we say, that he shall have not-

ing but his "*folly*." "**But the subtle;**" (and here we have altogether a different figure); has not inherited much at this present date. He has not much of the world. He has not much of another. How shall we express his excellence? He has this poor thing that he calls piety. Where is its worth to him? Why, its worth to him is that it is a splendid "*crown*." He **makes a crown of knowledge.** That is, he takes his piety, which is a mean, weak beginning, and makes it the badge of a glorious sovereignty. The Christian is a king. And by this is meant, that, when he becomes pious, every thing becomes subject to him (1 Cor. 3:22). It is a kingship in this world. All things unite in doing him good. This subject is renewed in the 24th verse, which we shall presently discuss, but it reveals its main richness in this. While *the simple have already inherited folly*, the "*subtle*," that is, the *spiritually discerning*, have won a "*crown*," that is, their feeble piety has got, not wealth already, but a *crown*, commanding it to be theirs (Rom. 8:28).

The lost, even, are subject to the Christian; and from the very first begin to feel it:—

- 19 The evil bow before the good,
and the wicked at the gates of the righteous man.

19. The evil bow before the good; and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.

"**The gates of the righteous man**" are where his servants sit and wait. Uriah lay at David's gate (2 Sam. 11:9). "**The Sin Offering**" lay at the door of Cain (Gen. 4:7). The "**wicked**" serve the "**righteous**"; and whether they do it knowingly, they do it wholly, and, through eternal ages.

The wicked are very "**poor**," therefore. Even in this world, *a poor man*, sooner or later, gets despised:—

- 20 The poor is odious even to his neighbor;
but the lovers of the rich man are many.

20. The poor is hated even of his own neighbour; but the rich hath many friends.

Comparing good things with bad, so shall it be with the wicked. They are the creation's paupers. Even their neighbors will hate them. The wife will hate her lost husband; I know not how. The saved will execrate the lost, though they

will profoundly love them as to pity. Wealth will assert her place; and those, celestially "rich," will find, as in this beggared world, their "lovers many."

Another Proverb guards this from error. Though we are to hate the wicked, yet we are to love them in the sense of benevolence:—

- 21** He who despises his neighbor, blunders; | **21** He that despiseth
but he who pities the poor, blessed is he! | his neighbour sinneth :
| but he that hath mercy
| on the poor, happy is
| he.

The impenitent is the **poorest** among men; and he who neglects him, and lets him go on in his iniquity, of course, is a cruel sinner. He who saves him, will be "**blessed**." "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that lead many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever." "**He who despises his neighbor, blunders.**" He wastes a splendid opportunity, not only for his neighbor, but for himself. It is great criminality, and, moreover, a grand mistake. "*Blunders*;" literally, "*misses*;" usually, "*sins*" (E. V.). Much is to be added to the freshness of these passages by adherence to first significations. "*Blunders*" stands balanced with "*blessed*." The appeal is to self. And the appeal is made more intense, where, instead of *despising* our neighbor, we actually "*devise evil*" against him:—

- 22** Must they not err that devise evil, | **22** Do they not err
seeing that Mercy and Truth devise good? | that devise evil? but
mercy and truth shall
be to them that devise
good.

Can any one see any flaw in "**Mercy and Truth?**" "*Mercy*" is pure benevolence; and "*Truth*" is that other quality of the good, which is commanded in the first table of the law, and answers to a love of holiness. Is there anything right, outside of "*Mercy and Truth?*" Is there anything wrong that the vilest rebel can detect in either one of them? Must "**they not err that devise evil?**" if for no other cause, than, that "*Mercy and Truth*" stand on the opposite side, and, through eternal ages, are busy in *devising good*?

23 By all labor there comes a profit; but the talk of the lips tends only to want. | ₂₃ In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.

This is a difficult sentence. We have found it hard to vindicate its sense. The grammar is all obvious; and, on that very account, the reading is singularly fixed. But “*all labor*” is any thing else than *profitable*; and “*the talk of the lips*” (31: 26) is one of the grandest ways of doing good among men. We understand it in a religious sense. All these Proverbs might be worldly maxims, some of them actually in use; all of them with a show of wisdom; some of them utterly unsound; but all of them, when adopted by the Holy Ghost, and turned in the direction of the gospel, true, in their religious aspect. So, now, in this peculiar instance, “*all labor*” might seem to promise well among the thrifty, but sometimes ruins men, even in this world, and is sure to ruin them, if worldly, in the world to come. But, now, as a religious maxim, it is without exception. “*All labor*” of a pious kind is marked, and will be gloriously rewarded out of the books of the Almighty. “*All labor*” of the impenitent, for their soul’s salvation, has “*profit*;” literally, *something over*. It brings them nearer. If continued long enough, it will bring them in; that is, if it be honest (Heb. 11. 6); while “*the talk of the lips*” or, possibly, “*an affair of the lips*;” that is, *mere intention*; does “*only*” mischief. Mark the balance between “*all*” and “*only*.” Seeking is “*all*” of it an advance. Intending is “*only*” a retreat. One gains a step; the other loses one. Starting up actually to work, if honest, is an advance toward wealth: while intention, which is but “*an affair of the lips*,” “*tends only*” to make us poor indeed (see 13: 12).

The Christian is rich in this world. We read in the 18th verse, of the “*subtle making a crown of knowledge*.” Aladdin was rich, when he had nothing but his lamp. If a ray of faith puts creation into bondage to a saint, then not only is his “*knowledge a crown*,” v. 18, but his “*crown is his wealth*.” What needs Aladdin further than his lamp? The sovereignty of saints, even in a forlorn world, makes a perfect opulence; while “*the folly of the stupid*”; seeing that it could give place

to this; seeing that he also could have the lamp; seeing that the crowned princes, the very best of them, were fools like him; and, therefore, that it can only be *because he is a fool* that he does not throw off his folly;—all this explains the closing clause, which is terse in its very quaintness; for, for the very reason that—

- 24 The crown of the wise is their wealth ;
the folly of the stupid is folly.

²⁴ The crown of the
wise is their riches :
but the foolishness of
fools is folly.

But the wise not only gains wealth to himself, but he is wealth to others. Moreover, he can not help being:—

- 25 A witness of truth saves souls ;
but he whose breath is lies, deludes.

²⁵ A true witness de-
livereth souls : but a
deceitful witness
speaketh lies.

We noticed that what crowned the wise (v. 18) was “*truth*” or “*knowledge*.” “*Truth*,” to become “*knowledge*,” must get into the heart. To do so, it must be *witnessed*. We noticed under the 2d verse that a man staggered, that is, he did not *walk in levelness*, because he did not see clearly. But, *per contra*, if a man sees clearly, he walks in *level ways*; and, then, according to our present Proverb, he “*saves*” unconsciously the “*souls*” of others. This is most clear when the view is negative. Let there be no *witnesses of truth*, and where are the saved? No sinners are rescued in a dead nation. Every Christian is a centre of light. The church is but a body of Christians. Where there is no church, where are the penitents? The truth, intended to be conveyed, is, that he who sees the truth, spreads it. While he who sees only “*lies*,” which is an exact portrait of the unredeemed, serves in spite of himself as a *delusion* to his friends, and deceives them into unbelief, just in proportion to his influence upon them. Woe be to the wife or child where the husband is a “*deceived witness*” (see v. 5). “*Witness*,” not, in this case, one who *bears witness*, but one who *witnesses*, in the sense of *seeing*. “*Whose breath is lies*”; i. e., who deceives instinctively, because he is deceived himself.

“*The fear of Jehovah*,” therefore, which is the great attitude of the saint, “*is a strong trust*.” It is a “*trust*” for the State,

and a “*trust*” for the man who has attained it : first, in that it need never leave him (v. 23) ; second, in that it has already crowned him (v. 24) ; third, that it may finally and forever save him (v. 25) ; and, fourth, that, having passed the ordeal as between life and ruin, he has entered an ascending path, and the “*fear*” itself is tending to increase brighter and brighter into the perfect day. The second clause supplies the only needed caution :—

- 26 In the fear of Jehovah is a strong trust ; | ²⁶*In the fear of the*
and to His children it becomes a refuge. | *LORD is strong confi-*
dence ; and his chil-
dren shall have a place
of refuge.

“**Becomes** ;” from the verb *to be*, which has that sense when it stands as of the text (see Gen. 19:26). “**To His children**.” “**Fear**” is a poor thing. “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Is. 64:6). It is anything but a “*refuge*” in itself. But as faith was imputed to the patriarch for righteousness (Rom. 4:22) ; so, this, need not cloud Christ’s ransom. Christ has so saved us that “*fear*” becomes our hope. He who has experienced “*fear*,” has gone into a retreat ; nothing need dislodge him from it. If the lost tremble, let them hasten after “*fear* ;” for by “*fear*” they become *children of God* ; and, as *children of God*, they have an eternal “*refuge*.” Of course, it must be a holy “*fear* :”—

- 27 The fear of Jehovah is where life burrows | ²⁷*The fear of the*
out | *LORD is a fountain of*
in getting away out of the snares of death. | *life, to depart from the*
snares of death.

“*The direction of the wise*” was said to be this same thing (13:14). Of course, in one, it was instrumentally ; in the other, intrinsically, and in its own nature. The “direction of the wise” shows others how they can **burrow out** of the snare ; “**the fear of Jehovah**” is the very deliverance itself. “*Fountain*” (E. V.) ; so called from being *a dug out place*. “*Fountain*” mixes the metaphor. See 13:14. The primary meaning sheds the light we need, and gives us the smooth emblem as in the other instance (13:14.) “*Folly*” is a *snare* (v. 24). It actually holds us by its own insanity. “*The word*” is a *snare* (13:13). “He that despises the word,” as though it were a

trap "is bound by it." "*The fear of Jehovah*" is *the burrowing out place*. The strings of these nets are perfect, with no possible *burrowing out*, except by gospel piety.

- 28** In a great people is the king's honor ;
but in the people's coming to nothing the
prince's ruin.

28 In the multitude
of people is the king's
honour; but in the
want of people is the
destruction of the
prince.

All grades depend upon their inferiors. The poor have us in their power. To be kind to the poor is a dictate of common selfishness. Carried into a spiritual light, the truth becomes much wider. Half of heaven will be what we did for the poor. Solomon was familiar with this as a king (see v. 35); but he marks the sentence as one for all humanity. If a man wishes to be comfortable on earth, let him make his inferiors "**great**." And, if he wishes to be rich in heaven, let him cultivate, with assiduous zest, the graces of the perishing.

Here, too, the folly of overbearing tyranny :—

- 29** He that is slow to anger, is of great dis-
cernment :
but he that is quick of spirit, enhances folly.

29 He that is slow to
wrath is of great under-
standing : but he that
is hasty of spirit exalt-
eth folly.

As damp sky opens the joints of the diseased; so gusts of wrath make a fool more foolish. "**Anger**" will not do for kings; and least of all for Christians. Its "**folly**" for a king, is still more strikingly presented in the thirty-fifth verse.

Moreover, it is injurious inwardly :—

- 30** A healthy heart is the life of the flesh ;
but perturbation is the rottenness of the
bones.

30 A sound heart is
the life of the flesh :
but envy the rottenness
of the bones.

Not, "*envy*" (E. V.), but *excitement* of any kind; "*perturbation*;" a wise saw, perhaps, of the old hygiene, but true spiritually. Religion rejoices in peace. Mad passion may be overruled; but so can our lusts be. As much as lieth in us, we should have peace. The soul is a temple (1 Cor. 3:17), and "*holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, forever*" (Ps. 93:5).

The poor are great instruments of Providence to *make* us what we ought to be :—

- 31 He that oppresses the weak, scorns his 31 He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.
Maker; but he that honors Him, has pity on the poor.

We treat God with no respect (1) when “**the poor**,” who are His children, are not treated as such, but are trampled on with rudeness and neglect; (2), when the poor, who are His dependants, are left unhelped, so as to seem to bring Him into discredit; but (as is most intended, judging from the whole drift of this part of the chapter), (3), when the poor, who are His instruments, and are sent to exercise our virtues, are not treated as such, but our “**Maker**,” thwarted in the work of *making* us better by these needy visitants.

Life moves by such sorts of influences; happily, for the good; hurtfully, in every event, to the impenitent man :—

- 32 The wicked is thrust lower by his evil; 32 The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.
but the righteous takes refuge in his very death.

“**Evil**;” that is, of any form. “**Death**;” that is, the worst form of “*evil*.” Observe the *crescendo*. “**Evil**,” which is supposed to be a discipline, **thrusts down the wicked**; “**death**,” the very grimmest of the list, becomes to “**the righteous**” a glorious “**refuge**.” “*Thrust lower*.” This is an intensive expression. If trouble thrusts a man lower, how much must joy and intoxicating wealth. The idea is,—all hurts him. Even discipline hurts the lost; while **the righteous finds a refuge, even in his very death**.

Sin, in all these terrors, is a great enlightener. “**Wisdom**” thrives by it. Out among the homes of the impenitent, she becomes the clearest and most evident to herself :— *

- 33 In a discerning heart wisdom rests quiet; 33 Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding: but that which is in the midst of fools is made known.
but in the midst of the stupid it is made known.

This borders on another verse (v. 7). The poor are very necessary to us; particularly, the spiritually poor. In a heaven on earth, piety would lie hid. In the very heart of things, and, as the Wise Man expresses it, "in the midst of the stupid," it has its proper arena. There it does good. There it gets good. There it stands out in its boldest contrasts. There it meets its boldest trials. But there it wins its chiefest victories; and finds God its "*Maker*" (v. 31) lifting it to the noblest good.

There is no danger to the soul, if it has one defence. Whole nations may pass through fires, if they have that one refuge. There is only one real act of compassion. It is where God gives a soul redemption :—

- 34 Righteousness lifts up a people;
and the mercy for nations is the Sin-Offer-

34 Righteousness ex-
altest a nation: but
sin is a reproach to any
people.

"Righteousness" means *inward righteousness*, and "Sin-Offering" is, literally, "*sin*." It is so in other passages (Gen. 4:7). "Righteousness" lifts to the very skies. The mercy of nations, as the words literally are, is not wealth, or peace, or a good king, or broad lands of plenty; but an interest in Christ "The Sin-Offering," and a home among the happy. "Mercy." This word is thought once or twice to mean "*a reproach*" (E. V.). It is marked so in the Lexicons. They quote other languages for it. But we have examined the texts; and they all seem better under the old sense of "*mercy*." So Leviticus (20:17). "It is a wicked thing" (viz., incest), "and they shall be cut off, etc." (E. V.). Rather, "It is a real mercy (observe 'the pronoun) that they be cut off;" that is, the sin is so damning, and they are getting worse so fast. Again, (Prov. 25:10), "Lest he that heareth it, put thee to shame" (E. V.); rather, "*lest he pity thee!*" which is the worst form of shame. Lastly, Job 6:14, (see Gesenius); though here, even our English Version retains the usual sense. "To him that is afflicted, *pity* should be shown, etc."

- 35 The kindness of a king is a wise servant;
but his wrath becomes one that brings

35 The king's favour
is toward a wise ser-
vant: but his wrath is
against him that caus-
eth shame.

Solomon gets back to his king-craft. These maxims were familiar to him. It is rarely wise for “**a king**” to get in a passion with his people (see vs. 29, 30). “If thou wilt be a servant unto this people,” was said to the successor of this very man (1 Ki. 12:7); if thou wilt “answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants forever.” But, more than king-craft, it is a rule for saints. The law of “**kindness**” should be on our lips. “The power of gentleness is irresistible.” If “*the mercy for nations is the Sin-Offering*” (see last verse), then we are all sinners together, and modesty forbids that we should go among the lost with anything but tenderness. The English Version is due to the presence of a preposition. “The king’s favor is *towards* a wise servant.” But that preposition becomes idiomatic in certain cases. I say, I want such a thing *for* a shelter. “The kindness of a king is *for* a wise servant,” i. e., serves as one (see 1 Cor. 15:29*). There is no preposition before the verb “**brings shame**;” but, on the contrary, the verb *is*, is written out, and, as usual in that case, means “**becomes**;” all of which state of facts is in favor of our new version. “**Servant;**” not simply “**wise,**” but an actual “**servant**” to the king, helping him to control his people.

This is not only true broadly, but in each particular detail:—

CHAPTER XV.

I A soft answer turns away wrath;
but a trying word arouses anger.

A SOFT answer
turneth away wrath:
but grievous words stir
up anger.

“**A trying word;**” literally, a word of *labor* or of *pain*. In dealing with sinners we ought to make the gospel plain at first, and not start unnecessary difficulties. Paul did this (1 Cor. 3:2). Words that are not wrathful, are often “*trying*,” as presenting to some **angry** inferior our reply in an easily misunderstood shape. We are to feed men with milk, and not with

* Though this is pertinent only with a new translation; “baptized *for*” meaning “baptized *as*.”

strong meat; all the more for being in a condition of fault. So kings have found it secularly. The chapter uselessly makes division here, in the very body of the thought. Indeed, the thought goes on for many a sentence:—

- 2 The tongue of the wise improves knowl- | ^z The tongue of the
edge;
but the mouth of the stupid makes folly wise useth knowledge
pour forth. aright: but the mouth
of fools poureth out
foolishness.

The outward advantage, as seen in the last text, is made to precede the inward, as occurs very often in the course of these chapters (14:30). The outward advantage was the *turning away wrath*. The inward advantage is **improving knowledge**. The great prize of the Christian is a *higher light*. Now, a careful “**tongue**” secures this. No human agency does it faster. “*The tongue of the wise does good to knowledge*” (literally); i. e., makes it greater. (We have examined this verb, and find it means *does good to* nearly everywhere). While, “**the mouth of the stupid**” makes the checks of wickedness disappear more than anything else; giving full swing to the habit of letting “**folly pour forth**.”

These things are all regulated by justice, however. How much a man shall be allowed to sin; and how much, by sinning, he shall be allowed to sin more; and how much, by speaking wisely, a wise man shall *do good to* his wisdom; are all regulated by law. Therefore:—

- 3 The eyes of Jehovah are in every place taking note of the wicked and the good. | ³ The eyes of the
Lord are in every place, beholding the
evil and the good.

“**Taking note;**” i. e., *watching* like an intent spy. The books are kept differently; for the sinner, exactly according to justice. He sins that much more for every act of sinning. “The wages of sin” is that much more “death,” (Rom. 6:23); and all measured by law. But, for the saint, that rule would work dreadfully. He also sins, and that grievously, and all the time. His holiness is but the budding of reform. His reckoning, therefore, is of grace. It is above measure, and beyond every thought. He, also, is rewarded according to his works (Rom.

2 : 6), and exactly for every one of them (Luke 19 : 17), but exactly as the acorn is rewarded in the tree, beyond all possible claim but this:—viz., “*grace for grace*,” “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

“The “**tongue**,” (to return to the subject treated), that is, that *tongue*, which is “a witness of truth,” and, therefore, “saves souls” (14 : 25), “is a *tree of life*.” Go into any garden of the lost, and where no such “*tree*” is, there all are Pagans. One sees, therefore, how the figure is kept up. If I am born into a land where there are gospel *tongues*; that is, if, when I grow up, I am not in China, and not in India, but in a Christian village; where people have and spread the gospel, that “*tongue, as a healing thing, is (my) tree of life*.” Where I get “*life*” is from its branches. But, in the same garden, there are other *tongues*. There is a *tongue* which is “**a subverting thing**.” Now, the tongue, “*as a subverting thing, is ruin like the wind*.” “*Like*,” is **¶** essentiæ. “**As**,” too, is the same preposition: literally, “*overthrow as it*,” or, “*it in the shape of overthrow*.” Such a **¶** occurs twice, accordingly, in this closing clause:—

- 4 The tongue, as a healing thing, is a tree of life;
but, as a subverting thing, it is ruin like the wind.

4 A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein, is a breach in the spirit.

“*The wind*,” often translated “*spirit*” (E. V.); but the primary meaning is “*breath*,” or, “*wind*;” and the primary meaning will eventually win the day, where it gives quickness to the sense.

The tongue, however, that *subverts*, and works “*ruin*,” does good also. Even the devil is a means of grace:—

- 5 A fool rejects the discipline of his father,
but gives him subtlety who keeps watch upon reproof.

5 A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.

Notice how strangely intense! A “*fool*” can do for a wise man what even his own “*father*” cannot do for the “*fool*.” The lesson is akin to that in 14 : 7, and 29 : 16. The impen-

tent man "rejects" even the tenderest appeals; while the rough life of the ungodly is a tender appeal to the believer. "Gives subtlety;" in the English Version, "*is prudent*;" "*is wise*," in several other passages. But the form is Hiphil. We have examined those passages. The causative seems to be their happiest sense. So, Ps. 83:4, "They have taken crafty counsel against thy people" (E. V.); better, "they have made their counsel crafty against, etc." So Prov. 19:25, "Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware" (E. V.); better, "Smite a scorner, and it will make the simple wise." Where one has the advantage of the form, he certainly has the right, if there be a superior significance.

If the nature of a righteous man, like some kindly soil, can thus use even poisons for its good, piety must be a high riches:—

- 6 The house of a righteous man is great
wealth;
but in the revenue of a wicked man is
trouble.
- 6 In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.

"The house;" as we have repeatedly seen (14:1; 1 Sam. 2:35), a man's *whole interest*. The mere *interest* of the "righteous," whether it seem high or low; his lot, whether it be on high or on a dung-hill; his hap, just as it is, whether it be easy or under pain; is, under the covenant of the Almighty, an enormous riches; while, not *the house of the wicked*; (for the Wise Man intends another of his 2d clause climaxes); but, stating his condition in the most favorable way, "*the revenue of the wicked*," imagining that to be of the most favorable kind; and not "*the revenue of the wicked*," but "*in*" the revenue of the wicked, as though the "*trouble*" were in the revenue itself; is, literally, *the being troubled* (Niphal). The splendors of the lost will involve but *trouble* in the whole eternity.

But back now again to the matter of *speech* (for we must observe that this writer indulges the diversions of thought, and yet tenaciously returns):—

- 7 The lips of the wise winnow knowledge;
but the heart of the stupid is not fixed.
- 7 The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doeth not so.

"Winnow." Most commentators say *scatter*, or "*disperse*" (E. V.). "*Winnow*," which has usage (Ruth 3:2), bears better upon the second clause. "*The tongue of the wise*," in the second verse, was said to *do good to knowledge*, i. e., *to increase it*. This thought is expository of that. *Winnowing knowledge*, i. e., letting the lips, under the guidance of wisdom, be an instrument for holding folly back, and giving utterance to knowledge, must be the finest practice for giving strength to piety: while the second clause shows the incompetence of folly to "*winnow*" anything, by saying, that "**the heart of the stupid is not fixed;**" (and, therefore, lacks the first principles of choice, in separating one thing from the other).

The next verse, perhaps, might begin a chapter. Leaving the specialty of speech, he goes on to more general conduct:—

- 8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomina-
tion to Jehovah;
but the prayer of the upright is His de-
light.

8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

"**The sacrifice of the wicked**," though it may be very costly; the column of Stylites; the hook-swinging of the East; the millions of anxious charity; without grace, must be purely sin. "**The prayer of the upright**"; (and now mark the climax again); though it *asks*, instead of *gives*; though it *takes* from the Almighty, instead of *giving* to his service, yet is a "**delight**," where the other is **abominable**. A man may serve God out of a sheer selfish wickedness. Moreover, *all* are abominable. There is no just man upon earth. But the righteousness has the sacrifice of Christ; while these others are left, without a cover, to their own abominable guiltiness.

The Wise Man, too, remembers a difference in their "**way**." Both are sinners; but the one sinner is travelling after sin, the other after holiness. This is a vast difference:—

- 9 An abomination to Jehovah is a way for
the wicked man;
but him who is journeying after righteous-
ness He loves.

9 The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.

Both being sinful, this is, indeed, a very skilful discrimina-

tion. The sin, which they both suffer, one pursues, the other shuns. The holiness, which they both lack, one neglects, the other follows. That which is the divine "abomination," the sinner makes his very "way." That which is God's "delight" (v. 8), the saint pursues after. Hence a vast difference. We are to notice the order of the 9th verse: it varies from the 8th. *The abomination of Jehovah is itself a way for the wicked.*

As another feature, the Wise Man points out the influence of the truth as a means of hardening:—

- 10 Discipline is an evil to him who forsakes
the path.
It is in hating reproof he dies.
- 10 Correction is
grievous unto him that
forsaketh the way; and
he that hateth reproof
shall die.

In our common version, this idea is not brought out. It is a very grave idea. Men not converted, but steadily *forsaking the path* of holiness, are injured by "*discipline*." It "*is an evil*" to them. "*In hating reproof*," they go through the very soul-action which we mean, when we say, "*they die*." Each "*hating*" emotion kills them. And this is the very philosophy of the *letter killing* (2 Cor. 3:6); not that it is poison in itself; but that the gospel awakens opposition, which, on its part, corrupts the mind.

The lost man, as the result, regulates by these changes from sin to sinning his whole eternity. That is, eternal justice, starting in this world to sink a sinner *pro gradu* in sinning, continues the like law and the like descent, (I mean, more sinning for more sin), through all eternity. To arrange hell, therefore, God need but inspect the human heart:—

- 11 Sheol and Destruction are before Jehovah, | 11 Hell and destruc-
because also the hearts of the children of | tion are before the
men. | Lord; how much more
then the hearts of the
children of men?

"*How much more*" (E. V.). We see no ground for this. There are but two simple particles, "*also*" and "*because*." How do we get "*how much more*" out of them? We doubt whether they ever have that meaning (see Class XLIV.). But in this text, "*also*" and "*because*" are just what we want. "*Sheol and Destruction*," i. e., the grave and that doom that it

precedes, “**are before Jehovah, because, also, the hearts of the children of men**” are before Him. The intimation is, *God knows Hell because He knows man*. He knows that, “*hating reproof, we die*” (v. 10), and just how fast we *die* or sink by each act of *hatred*. In other words, He knows how fast sin grows under an administration of justice; and, therefore, He knows just how hot to make the pit, and how far a given sinner will have gone down, at any date, through his eternal age. *He knows Hell, because, also, the hearts of the children of men.*”

Nor will these presagings be vitiated by any unexpected turning back:—

12 A scorner loves not him that reproves him;

neither will he go to the wise.

12 A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him; neither will he go unto the wise.

Nulla vestigia retrosum. God need not calculate anything but a perpetual decline; because snatching the sinner back is His own salvation. A sinner is just as much fixed as in the pit, except for the special act of the grace of the Most High. The saints, He saves. All sinners, not specially delivered, keep away from Him. They keep away from Him by a law as fixed as Himself. He understands that law. He announces it in this text. He knows Death and Hell, *because, also, the hearts of His wicked creatures*. And He knows when they will not escape; because He knows whom He will deliver; and He knows that all the rest **love not Him that reproves them, neither will go to the wise.**

On the contrary, they grow morose and complaining. This affects their **countenances** (v. 14). Disliking reproof, they grow bitter. It appears upon the face; and one of the influences of religion is, to clear up the **upbraiding countenance**:—

13 A glad heart does good to the countenance;

but by grief of heart comes an upbraiding spirit.

13 A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.

“**A glad heart**,” one of the attributes of piety. “**Does good to**,” “Come with us, and we will do thee good” (Num. 10:29). “**Does good to the countenance**,” improves it, as we say in our

idiom. “**But by grief of heart;**” that heavy-lading, that Christ speaks of (Matt. 11:28). “**Comes an upbraiding spirit.**” I venture this from the verb נִזְבַּד, meaning *to upbraid*. This seems a Niphal participle, having a passive causative force: literally, *a spirit set to upbraiding*, or *caused to upbraid*. The commentators all go in another direction; creating an irregular derivative from another root. They speak of a “*broken-spirit*” (E. V.). The difficulties of that are, that the sentence becomes a truism, and, moreover, we lose a most graphic account of the lost state. On earth and in hell the lost “*spirit*” is an *upbraider*. What can show more the sinner’s being fixed in the wrong path than that he both hates reproof (v. 12), and becomes himself a reprobate; that he both keeps clear of the wise, and blasphemous and upbraids them? Out of this, religion redeems “*the stupid*” (v. 14). The least measure of introduced “*knowledge*” sets a man to *seeking* more and more; while the very “*countenance of the stupid*” seems to grow *fatter* and more coarse, as though the very face itself *fed on folly*:—

14 A heart, made discerning, seeks knowledge ; ¹⁴ The heart of him
but the countenance of the stupid feeds on folly. ¹⁴ that hath understand-
ing seeketh knowledge :
but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness

Literally, *pastures*, like a brute. A thing *fed*, takes the texture of its nourishment. “*The countenance of the stupid*” seems *fed of folly*. It grows more and more inane and brutal. The Septuagint has caught this idea. For, deranging the 13th verse, it casts out the idea of “*spirit*,” and abides by the figure. “*A glad heart does good to the countenance ; but a grieved heart οκνηπωπάξει, i. e., has a perturbed or angry aspect.*” Perhaps, also, the superficial motives of sin are noted. Light wakes a deep-seated appetite; sin feeds the face. “*Countenance.*” There is a rival reading. It means “*the mouth*” (E. V.). But (1), because “*countenance*” is mentioned in the last verse; and because (2) it is the more difficult idea * (viz., to speak of the “*countenance*” as “*feeding*”); and because (3) the sense is so graphic; and because (4) it is in the received text, we make

* It is the rule of exegetes, that the more difficult idea shall be preferred in the codex, because the more likely to be rejected by the copyists.

no hesitation in preferring our present Hebrew. “**Made discerning;**” a Niphal, that is to be translated as a causative passive.

The hard “*countenance*” of the lost is fed by the more universal sorrow of the world:—

- 15 All the days of the toiling are evil;
but a good heart is a continual feast.

| 15 All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast.

A glorious comparison! A sour heart is fed by a hard life; and, yet, though the hard life is common to all, a brightened spirit masters it; and not only masters it, but sweetens it; and turns “*the days of the toiling*” into “*a continual feast*.” “*Toiling*.” The word is very peculiar. “*Afflicted*,” our Version has it. “*Humble*” is the translation in many a case. “*Toiling*” strikes us as best; (1) because such is the root: the verb, first of all, means *to toil*. And (2), such is the sense: the *toiling* character of life makes all groan together. “*All the days of the toiling are evil*.” We are not paid. Such is the toil of our spirits, that life is a battle. As a worldly maxim, “*a good heart*” carries the day. But, as an adopted text, the wise saw strengthens itself. Under the toils of life, “*a good heart*,” regenerate by grace, greets the same toil the lost man does, and finds the “*heart*,” itself, “*a continual feast*.”

Religion, therefore, makes the opulent man:—

- 16 Better is a little with the fear of Jehovah,
than a great treasure and trouble there-
with.

| 16 Better is little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure, and trouble therewith.

The preposition gives choice of meanings. It may be, *by* “*the fear of Jehovah*;” in which case it would mean, the “*little*” earned by piety: or it may be *in* “*the fear of Jehovah*;” in which case it would mean the “*little*” held and got possession of in a devout state; or it may be *along with*, as the word often means. All the ideas are correct. We choose as our English Version; and, of course, for both parts of the sentence; for the expression, “*therewith*,” has the same familiar preposition, and the same chance of either of the alterna-

tive meanings. “**Better**” is a Christian’s shieling, than an impenitent man’s palace (14: 11). “*Better is a little with the fear of Jehovah, than a great treasure and trouble therewith.*”

And that, not on account of heaven alone, but for the intrinsic joys of piety :—

- 17** Better is an allowance of vegetables, and
 love there,
 than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith. | ¹⁷ *Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.*

“*An allowance* ;” literally, *a thing appointed* ; the past participle from a verb to *decree*. The speech is dense. Not only “*vegetables*,” but the lighter sorts of them; more nearly “*herbs*” (E. V.); not only light fare, like that, but a *limited amount*; not only *flesh*, on the other scale, but “*stalled*” beef; not only “*stalled*” beef, but no limit; “*a stalled ox.*” Not only might this well be a worldly Proverb (where, doubtless, Solomon found it), to represent the married state, and all the arena of human affection; but signal, when brought into religion. “*A dinner of herbs*” (E. V.), with the blessed “*love*” of the Redeemer, is better than a pampered feast, and the gloom of the impenitent.

Nay this “*love*” makes love, and quiets life :—

- 18** A wrathful man stirs up a ground for
 quarrel;
 but one slow to anger quiets contention. | ¹⁸ *A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.*

In the pit, the blasphemy will rise and swell, as it is stirred up one man by his neighbor. *Upbraidings* (v. 13) are contagious, even in this world. Ordinary *quarrels* are wonderfully quieted, if a man waits. But *divine quarrels*, if we stay to look at God, and observe His reasonings, are wonderfully held back, and, by His grace, signally prevented.

Grace has not only a brighter (v. 15), but an *easier* time. We see the like in worldly matters :—

- 19** The way of a sluggard is as a hedge of
 thorns;
 but the path of the upright is cast up. | ¹⁹ *The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain.*

Nothing is more striking than the ease with which a prompt man works. His tackle is all right; so is his ground; it has been made smooth by his last year's toil. His hands are not blistered. His lazy neighbor admires, and longs after his chance. Laziness begets labor. In the round year, the sluggard fevers himself more than the diligent. While, in the spiritual world, the Proverb is more signal still. Just where "**the upright**" stands there is a smooth path; (and, let it be observed, "**the upright**" means *the smooth, the level*; see Class XXXII.). Just where the sinner stands is a **thorn hedge**. He cannot enter into life. So he imagines. And yet he is a "**sluggard**"; for he *will not* do the plainest duties. The Proverb is right, therefore,—that it is a principle of slaggardism to create "*a hedge of thorns*"; and that it is far *smoother* to take hold of the faith by the right handle, and, at once, than to be eternally kicking against the pricks of the gospel.

Do not let us forget, either, the higher motive:—

- 20** A wise son will gladden his father;
but a fool of a man despises his mother.

I have said already (1:8) that the fifth commandment sums up the first table. It figures all relations. Our highest "**father**" is God. "**A wise son**" will stir himself to do all his duty, that he may please God. This is a constant motive. In another place, we translated in the imperative; because it suited the sense. But here, the second clause is a direct didactic assertion. The "**mother**" stands for the higher relation, just as the "**father**" does. Just as the worldly, if they have the feelings of men, will honor their blood; so the Christian, will not only be faithful to his earthly parents, but will find it his most instinctive life, to obey "**his Father**" in the Heavens.

There are, therefore, higher motives than "joy," whether present or eternal. But "joy," and, too often, merely of the present, is too much the motive of the impenitent:—

- 21** Folly is joy to the heartless man ;
but a man of discernment makes a direct
track.

Not so much, “*folly*” is joyful ; for that is only partially the case. We have already seen (v. 13) how sin crimps the countenance. But “*folly is joy* ;” that is, the life of a sinner is like a grazed ox, who strikes for the sweetest pasture. The text marks a vital difference :—“**A man of discernment makes a direct track.**” That is, as a thrifty house-keeper tumbles up her rooms, and makes things right, whether it be pleasant or not so the Christian, for the love of the Almighty, “*makes a direct track* ;” that is, makes things straight, whether a joy or not. Note, then, the vital difference. “*Folly is joy*.” It does not arrive at it; but its quintessence is, that it thought it would While the good, not stupidly either, but as “*a man of discernment*,” puts duty first, and takes joy as it comes; so answering the words of Christ :—“ For whosoever will save his soul, shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his soul, for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it (Mar. 8 : 35). ”

“The law of [the] mind” (Rom. 7 : 23) being, therefore, the guide of the Christian, gives the greatest room for the *counsel of others*; particularly of the Great Counsellor :—

22 There is a failure of plans where there is no consulting;
but by greatness of counsellors each plan succeeds.
Without counsel purposes are disappointed; but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

“**Failure** ;” a failing ; infinitive Hiphil of the verb *to break*. Where there is no counsel at all ; that is, where there are none to “tell it to the generation following” (Ps. 48 : 13), religion dies out. The counsel of parents is, instrumentally, life. The counsel of Christ is vitally so. “**Greatness of counsellors**.” It is more important to have *great counsellors* than a “*multitude*” (E. V.); and the word means *great*, oftener than it does *many* (see 20 : 6).

To this thought, of *counsel*, the Wise Man adds the priceless-ness of the “*word*,” that this good counsel may prompt a man to give forth. In those oral times, a “*word*” might destroy. A man might bargain (see 18 : 21) by the breath of his mouth, in a way that might ruin him in a moment. So might he make himself rich :—

23 A man has joy by the decree of his mouth ; | ²³ A man hath joy
and a word in its season, how good it is ! | by the answer of his
mouth ; and a word
spoken in due season,
how good is it !

The verb usually translated to “*answer*” (E. V.), means primarily to *sing*, or, rather, to *break out with the voice*; rather to *speak after a silence*; which, of course, would usually be in making “*answer*.” Hence the idiom, “*answered and said*”—literally, *broke silence*, and *said*. Such an utterance would become very oracular in the more solemn decisions of life. A “*decree*,” as we have translated it, is a noun out of the above described verb. It means an *uttered decision*; such as an answer may be to a business speech; such as is alluded to on God’s part, chap. 16:4; and such as may be overmasteringly momentous in the business and results of life. Solomon sees in it a rare truth in respect to decisions for immortality. “*A word!*” Why, it may win eternity! An offer presses! “*A word*” refuses! “*A word*” snatches possession forever! Lo! the amazing difference! Body and soul hang upon “*a word*.” *Great counsel* (v. 22), indeed, that is, that prompts a man to say, Yes! and “*a word (spoken) in season*” truly! if it be a confession of Christ! and if it take the offer of an eternal blessedness!

Because there need be no drawing back after that beginning:—

24 The path of life is upward for the wise man ; | ²⁴ The way of life is
because of the turning from Sheol beneath. | above to the wise, that
he may depart from
hell beneath.

It is a word that wins. A word, if it be gracious, saves at once. Afterward, “*the path of life*” looks unceasingly “*upward*,” and that “*because of the (first) turning from Sheol beneath*.” Let “*the word spoken in season*” be, “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief;” and let the word be genuine, i. e., as this verse describes it, *a turning—a turning round upon one’s path*, i. e., a *turning up from Sheol*, (the figure of the pit, Ps. 9:17), and the man’s joy is won. His path, after that, may be “*upward*” perpetually. *A man shall have joy by the decree of his mouth, and a word spoken in its season, how good is it* (v. 23)!

Every other joy is “*proud*;” that is, is built upon a mistake. All other joy arrogates a good condition which does not really

exist. It is only the humble penitent the boundary of whose estate is fixed. Solomon brings this home by another worldly Proverb:—

- 25** The house of the proud shall Jehovah pull down;
but He keeps fixed the boundary of the widow.

25 The L ORD will destroy the house of the proud; but he will establish the border of the widow.

“**The house;**” i. e., *every interest* (14:1). “**Pull down;**” because even worldly men have noticed the precariousness of pride. “**The widow;**” even worldly eyes have noticed that these are wards of the Almighty. But Solomon adopts each Proverb spiritually. “*The proud,*” is the man too well satisfied in his own mind (21:24) to *utter the good word*, and *have joy* (v. 23); and “*the widow,*” is the “poor in heart,” who is ready with the availing “*answer:*” “Lord, I believe.”

The difference, which this good “word” begins, turns out to be a difference of *usefulness*. The man, who has turned up from Sheol (v. 24), is a man who has turned away from mischief:—

- 26** Plans of evil are the abomination of Jehovah;
but pleasant words are pure.

26 The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the L ORD; but the words of the pure are pleasant words.

“**Evil.**” This is the name for wickedness which most frequently means *mischief*. The false messenger (13:17) will be swept out of the way, because he is an “evil.” He answers no end but judgment. God lights His candles, to put them on a candlestick (Luke 8:16). “**Pleasant words;**” literally, “*words of pleasantness.*” “*Pleasant words are pure.*” This is the Scripture ethics. If we desire to know whether “*words are pure;*” (and “*words,*” here, for Eastern reasons, mean actions as well as “*words;*” nay, really mean the whole round of conduct; see remarks pp. 163, 174; see also Job 20:12; Is. 10:7); if we wish to know, whether a man’s whole life is “*pure;*” all we have to ask is,—Is it *kind?* Ye owe no man anything but to love one another (Rom. 13:8). It is the **plans of mischief**, that “*are the abomination of Jehovah.*” And the reason heaven

is a place of rest, is, that the "*pure*" are so filled with the warmth of love, that it is easy to cultivate grace, and, in kindness to others, to hold fast one's purity of spirit.

Unpleasantness is an *unpleasantness* to oneself:—

- 27 He troubles his house who seizes upon
prey; but he who hates bribes, lives. | 27 He that is greedy
of gain troubleth his own house: but he that hateth gifts shall live.

It would be a disturbing influence, if a clod ceased to have an attraction for the earth; but far more disturbing to the clod than to the planet. *Kindness* (v. 26) is a universal gravitation. It is the highest law (one, perhaps, except) of the created universe. If a soul ceases to be *kind*, it disturbs the universe; but not near so much the universe, as the soul. "**His house;**" as elsewhere (14:11), his whole interest. "**Prey;**" unkind, and, in general, too eager instances of snatching upon wealth. "**Bribes;**" a corresponding term. Solomon is full of such warnings against our usual business eagerness (18:1; 20:21).

If kindness be the wisest course (v. 26), the "*pure*" will meditate kindness, and digest their plans for it:—

- 28 A righteous heart thinks in order to decide; but the mouth of the wicked pours out evils. | 28 The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.

"**Mouth;**" all agency. Religion is so much like politeness, that a polite man "*winnows*" (v. 7) his acts, till they look sometimes like religion; but watch men, where the guise of *kindness* fails them, viz., their aim to be polite, and their "*mouth pours out evils.*" There is a recklessness of act, that only a religious *purity* (v. 26) can essentially restrain.

These differences of the two, I mean, the lost and the saved, are the cause and the consequence of very different relations that they bear to the Almighty:—

- 29 Jehovah is far from the wicked; but the prayer of the righteous He hears. | 29 The Lord is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.

The second clause becomes exegetical of the first. God is

not far from any body (Ps. 139:8). In fact, we live in Him. But He is far from many people's "prayer." And, if sin be, so much, *unkindness*, how can we complain if the Great King should be unkind to us?

Here is the secret of v. 27,—"*He troubles his house*" who is unkind to men. Here is the secret of v. 30. It was an old proverb, no doubt, that bright *eyes* made others happy, and that *good news* put life into the *bones*. But Solomon seizes upon it as of our relations with the Most High:—

- 30** The light of the eyes rejoices the heart.
A good report fattens the bones.

30 The light of the
eyes rejoiceth the
heart: and a good re-
port maketh the bones
fat.

The thought that "*light*" may mean "*the eyes'* own light, and that the mighty truth intended is, that the "*light*" the mind sees, "*rejoices*" it with blessed inward revelations, is corrected by the fact, that the word has יְהִי prefixed. Such derivatives have an implication of *place*. רָאֵשׁ means light unlocalized, like the creature of the first day. רָאֵשׁ נֶמֶת means a luminary, or something that yields light. "*The light of the eyes*" means the look of a pleased friend. When He is the Almighty, how it "*rejoices the heart*." And when the rapture of another sense is secured by "*a good report*" ("*a good hearing*," as it is in the original), the *good news* being also from on high; it reaches the very penetralia of our comfort; or, as the Proverb expresses it, it *fattens* (*our very*) *bones*.

It does so *permanently*. The idea of *abiding*, always should come to the front. Faith, first! and then that it be eternal! *A true word*; or, *one right answer* (v. 23); and then, "*the path of life upward for the wise*" (v. 24); and then backward never afterward:—

- 31** The ear that hears the reproof of life
abides in the midst of the wise.

31 The ear that hear-
eth the reproof of life
abideth among the
wise.

At the last day no sheep will come out from among the goats. But now there is a daily call. It is "*a good report*" (v. 30), viz., the gospel. It is a "*reproof of life*," i. e., a *quicken ing reproof*. Blessed is the man that "*hears*" it! One note rescues

him, and moves him quite out from among the lost; and, after that, hearing induces him to hear, and then he "abides;" literally, *stays over night*; *ex usu, dwells*; i. e., *makes a permanent dwelling*; and, as the "*ear*" will be eternally the same avenue of grace, (for "*ear*" is the feminine with the verb), "*The ear that hears the reproof of life abides in the midst of the wise.*"

So the next is easy:—

- 32** He that lets go admonition, despises him-
self;
but he that hears reproof, gets possession
of heart.
- 32** He that refuseth
instruction despiseth
his own soul: but he
that heareth reproof
getteth understanding.

If the 31st verse is true, the 32d verse is evident. If an hour of faith puts the lost among the saved, he that "lets go" a chance for it, holds his very being in contempt. "**He that hears reproof gets possession of heart.**" A note of the glad intelligence, lifts a man, and puts him in "*possession*" of his being; nay, of a kind of being that the lost know nothing of, viz., of "*heart*." (There is no article). "*Heart*" means not *love*, as we count it, but *changed heart*, i. e., *piety*. A man who refuses to believe, "**despises his soul;**" which is the literal Hebrew; and that, not so unreally as we might suspect; for the noblest attribute of a soul he has flung off; for he has never reduced it to his possession.

"*Reproof*," which has been twice used, and "**discipline**" which is now made to balance it in these last important texts have a respect of painfulness; and Solomon, in this coming verse, tempers that pain, by showing what "*discipline*" really is:—

- 33** The fear of Jehovah is the discipline of
wisdom;
and before glory is affliction.
- 33** The fear of the
LORD is the instruction
of wisdom; and before
honour is humility.

"**Fear** hath torment," says the apostle John (1 Jo. 4:18). That fear is not altogether the "*fear*" of our text; but is a part of it. I do not remember the "*fear*" of the Almighty as a title applied in heaven. "**The fear of Jehovah**" has some particle of painfulness; and that painfulness makes it of the

nature of “*discipline*.” The best “*discipline*” of the saints is the abiding “*fear*” of the Almighty. The Proverb seems to imply that it will not last always; that it is painful; and that we will not continue pained;—that it is necessary for us to be under just that gentle sort of discipline, that “*fear*” can give, whilst we are in this world. And that necessity he states, in that “*before glory is affliction*.” Not “*honor*” (E. V.); so much as *weight*, or “*glory*.” Not “*humility*” (E. V.); but primarily, *toil*; *ergo*, more generally, “*affliction*.” “We must through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14: 22).

CHAPTER XVI.

WE see this chapter still laboring with that important thing, “*the decree of the tongue*” (15: 23; 18: 21). If it is so important a thing; because, on earth, it may beggar a man; and because, for heaven, it may give him immortality; how can it be that a poor worm is allowed such amazing determinations? ‘*He is not*,’ is the inspired answer. He may be, instrumentally; but not even that, as predeterminedly as he generally imagines:—

- i To man may belong the arrangements of the heart;
but from Jehovah is the decree of the tongue.

THE preparations
of the heart in man,
and the answer of the
tongue, is from the
LORD.

Undoubtedly we arrange and plan. That is a matter of consciousness. But, “on the lips of the king” (v. 10), and on every other creature, these are but tools of the Designer. He uses our plannings to shape the last word to His mind. Accordingly, in the 9th verse:—“A man’s heart devises his way, but Jehovah plants his step.” “**Belong.**” All is expressed by the preposition *to*; literally, “*to man*, (or, *for man*), are the arrangements of the heart.” Hence, they err, who make the “*to*” and the “*from*” mean the same; and they destroy the antithesis that is intended. “*The arrangements of the heart*” are, in-

deed, as much God's as the final "decree;" because, in brief, everything is. He destines everything: but not in the same sense in which they are consciously man's. They precede the end, and are present. They cannot determine the end: that is future. I cannot determine now, what I will say the next moment. God can. I can and do arrange. But at any convenient point; at any interval, even the very least; God can let me slide. What I shall say, is a part of His Providence. I cannot ordain to say it, in such a way as that it shall be said. In the smallest interval that follows, God may leave Pharaoh, and he may have new views as to letting the children of Israel go. God cannot tempt me to evil; but He can govern by the privation of good. And, therefore, "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; He turneth it whithersoever He will" (E. V.).

This, of course, implicates God, to our weak seeming at least, in the sins of the wicked. The next verse discharges Him from any such accountability:—

- 2 As to all the ways of a man, pure in His own eyes,
while yet He weighs out spirits, is Jehovah. ² All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes: but the LORD weigheth the spirits.

This change is very bold, and yet, really, not so bold as the old readings. It explains why "pure" is found to be in the singular. The common version, "all the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes," besides that disagreement of number, is strained, in sense, materially. There are instances of the like thought, I know, (Ps. 36:2); and, in one case, great similarity of language (12:15); but the emphasis, in the present instance, seems stronger than in any of the rest, and would make us pause. It is not altogether true, that "all the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes." Moreover, the case most like it (21:2), and which might seem irrefragably to establish it in its sense, we shall find habited in the same way. We shall come to it in a few chapters. We shall read it, "As to the whole way of a man, right in His own eyes, and weighing out hearts, is Jehovah." One will serve as a confirmation of the other. And, really, as an interesting fact, we shall make much of the argument, that they stand

in a like context. It can be no accident, that in the second case, like the first, the passage is speaking of the control of evil (21 : 1). “*Streams of water is the heart of a king in the hand of Jehovah ; upon anything He pleases, He turns it.*” A bolder thought is not in Scripture. And while our common English would jump needlessly into another subject, the version I give, fits all most perfectly. God moves man as He lists; and yet, as to the way of a man, He is right in His own eyes, while “**He weighs out spirits.**” “*He weighs out*” to all, that which determines them, and that is, gifts, according to the measure that He ordained in the Redeemer. “**All**” There is no exception to this. “*Weighs out;*” not “*weigheth*” (E. V.), in the sense of taking strict account; but “*weighs out.*” We have looked at all the instances, and this word is, almost universally, mistranslated. It means, not to *ascertain a weight*, but to *weigh out* a fixed amount (2 Ki. 12 : 12 ; Job 28 : 25). This suits the context. It does not mean, “*All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes, but the Lord*” looks deeper than our ways, and “*weigheth the spirits*” (E. V.); but it means, “**As to all the ways of a man, pure in His own eyes, while yet**” He fixes character; that is, while He makes gifts that must determine it: or, in other words, “*weighs out spirits (to men), is Jehovah.*” See, for farther evidence, (chap. 21 : 2).

This being the state of the facts, it is our interest to bring the two things together. (1), God intending to govern us, and (2), the heart, for all that, being answerable for sin, it is well to cause these interests to be one :—

- 3 Roll thy doings in the direction of Je- | ³ Commit thy works
hovah ; unto the LORD, and thy
and they shall have success according to thoughts shall be es-
thy plans. tablished.

“**Roll**,” not exactly “*commit*” (E. V.). We might point to other cases (Ps. 22 : 8 ; Prov. 26 : 27). “*In the direction of;*” the preposition, *towards*. *Trust*, therefore, is less implied than an attitude of service. *Roll forward thy work in the direction of Jehovah*; that is, *with an eye to Him*; *in a harmony with Him*; recognizing His “*plans*” (v. 4): and what will be the result?

Why; God means to have His way at any rate. Our works will ‘have success,’ one or the other fashion, in His scheme of Providence. He works-in the work even of Beelzebub. But if we act “*in the direction of*” His will, they will have success *as we planned them*. That seems to be the meaning. We might translate,—“*Thy plans shall have success;*” but there is a difference of gender. It is true, when the verb comes first, the gender may be not attended to (Green Gr. § 275, 1); but, wherever there is an agreement, we had better claim it. “**Thy doings**” agree in gender; “*thy plans*” do not; but they may be placed absolutely (see Green’s Gr. § 271, 4). The whole would then mean, “*Thy doings*” shall “*have success*” (literally, *be made to stand*) *as* thy plans, or, *in the shape* thy plans gave them. Or, in other words, God, having an express purpose for all you do (v. 4), will give success to your work at any rate. He has the exact niche for all you work at. But, if you turn it in *His direction*, and aim with it at His will, He will aim at yours; that is, He will give a success *after your plan*; if not in its actual letter, still, in what is far the best, in the way best suited to your peculiar interest.

Then the fourth verse comes nobly in with an assertion absolutely complete:—

- 4 Jehovah has made everything for His decree;
yea, even the wicked man for the day of evil.
⁴ The Lord hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

Ewald has pointed out an article before the word, which we translate “*decree*.” It fixes it as a noun rather than as of a compound preposition. It bears upon the question as to how we are to understand the pronoun. Most commentators refer it to “*everything*.” The meaning would then be, *God has made everything for itself, or for its own sake*; a thought, either too obvious, or altogether false. But the noting of the article, and the bearing of the context, both turn the pronoun toward the Almighty:—*God has made everything for His decree*. The word “*decree*” we choose, rather than *purpose*, which Gesenius gives, because we desire to identify it with the word in two other Proverbs. “A man has joy by the decree of his mouth”

(15 : 23); and, "from Jehovah is the decree of the tongue" (16 : 1). The word is the same in all the three. If we translated it by *answer* in two of the cases, and by *purpose* in this last, it would not mark the connection. The word "*decree*" answers for all of the cases. A man has a *decree*, when he makes a decision as to anything important in life. God has a *DECREE*, or eternal dictate of His righteousness. He has made all things for that. Not "*for Himself*," (E. V.); that were champion heartlessness. "**Even the wicked.**" He actually creates the wicked. "**For the day of evil;**" only necessarily and righteously. The universe is God's single work; and everything, whether bad or good, makes up a necessary part of it.

Pride, then, how (1) *insane!* and how (2) *wicked!*—

- 5 Every one that is proud of heart is an abomination to Jehovah.
When hand to hand, he shall not go unpunished.
- 5 Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

(1) If God has made everything for His purpose (v. 4), how foolish the man who arrogantly forgets Him! (2) If God has besought us to work docilely under His plan (v. 3), how wicked the man who **proudly** mutinies. If God works even in kings (21 : 1), how absurd the man who would work away from Him. How can it work well? "**Hand to hand;**" that is, in close quarters (11 : 21), as we shall come, all of us, at the last, how can the workers *outside of the Almighty*, possibly "*go unpunished?*"

Now, as all have been such workers, and all deserve not to "*go unpunished,*" what can save any of us?—

- 6 By mercy and truth iniquity is covered; and through the fear of Jehovah is the turning from evil.
- 6 By mercy and truth iniquity is purged; and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.

"**Mercy and truth;**" holiness. "*Mercy;*" *love of our neighbor*, and "*truth;*" i. e. "*the girdle*" (Eph. 6 : 14). "*Truth,*" the love of which we are to receive (2 Thess. 2 : 10), "*truth,*" correlate of "*grace,*" which Christ had (Jo. 1 : 14) and "*all we*

received," viz., that "*love*" in the second table, which is not love of Creator or Judge, omnipotent or all-wise, but love of the Holy (Is. 41 : 16), a revelation of God's righteousness (Rom. 1 : 17), "*truth*" in the inward parts (Jer. 31 : 33), God's "*light* in which we shall see light" (Ps. 36 : 9). This "*mercy and truth*" **covers** our "*iniquity*." All such expressions are bifold. Christ saves us, and we save ourselves. And so *covering*, or *atoning* as it is sometimes translated, is variously used, and we must not shudder at the expression that our personal righteousness should *cover* our "*iniquity*," inasmuch as gospel passages say that converting anybody hides (*covers*) his trespass (Jas. 5 : 20), and that "*charity shall cover the multitude of sins*" (1 Peter 4 : 8). "**Fear;**" the soul's novitiate (Prov. 9 : 10); like faith. Faith may be in the impenitent. "*Fear*" and faith bring sinners to their knees (Gal. 3 : 24); but it must be a holy "*fear*," before it is a name for piety. Faith must be *formata* before it can be saving. The "*truth*" must enter, i. e., new conscientious light, before faith can please God (Prov. 9 : 10), or "**the fear of Jehovah (be) the turning from evil**" (see 9 : 10.) The רָאשׁ is to be kept up. It is more like a *departing* (E. V.), than the word בַּשְׂרֵבֶת (1 : 32). Sin, being slow to wear out, the "*turning*" has to go on; and it becomes a journey; and we travel each day, just as we set out. We are to get away from sin at all hazards. And, as it lasts into an age, we are to make a day's journey every day. And the very last of the journey, like the very beginning, is, as the Wise Man expresses it, by "*the fear of Jehovah*."
"*Fear;*" literally. The actual "*fear*" of Jehovah, tempered by love, is the thing of "*discipline*" (see 15 : 33), which drives the Christian away from his iniquity.

Who gets these prizes? for, "*Jehovah has made everything for His decree*" (16 : 4). Doubtless, He has reasons for choosing His believers; but these reasons are the peculiarities of His purpose. He saves a man; not for any good He finds in him, but, when His enemy; selecting him, as a stone, for a particular place in His universal building:—

- 7 Because it pleases Jehovah, the ways of a man,
even of His enemies, He sets at peace with Him.

7 When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

The condition of saving any body, then, is, that it “**pleases Jehovah.**” “*When it pleases, etc.*,” would have been a fair translation; giving the preposition the sense of *with*, or, *along with*: *along with its pleasing*; or, *when it pleases*. But the preposition means, more often, *by means of*. We have a right, then, to the more frequent meaning. It is *by means of*, or “**because of**,” as we have translated it, *its pleasing Jehovah*, that any body gets delivered. “**Even of his enemies.**” This is the joyful doctrine (15:30)! The *pleasing*, too, is not arbitrary, or a mere do-as-you-please sovereignty, but for reason. “*Enemies* ;” a plural participle, which might be apposed to “**ways** ;” but, as the meaning would be positively the same, the Wise Man has not cared for the ambiguousness. In that way parsed, it would read,—*Because it pleases Jehovah, the ways of a man, even though hostile to Him, He sets at peace with Him.* But, in either case, the great truth comes out,—that, by its pleasing God, men, who are positively His enemies, are ransomed, and brought to be “**at peace with him.**”

This *being at peace*, or this “**righteousness**,” as its immediate result, is, in that view, everything :—

- 8 Better is a little by means of righteousness, than great revenues by that which is not a judgment.

8 Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right.

The mannerism, that makes the second clause more intense (15:5), we hardly need notice so often. The awkwardness of “*judgment*,” which sounds, in our language, like *penalty*, or like *good sense*, is atoned for by its evangelism. “*Right*” (E. V.), sponges out the thought; and, therefore, it is highly important in such passages to hold on to “*judgment*,” as the best our tongue can do for us. “*Righteousness*” is our great gift; and *judgment*, as that court award which gives it or makes it possible, is “**better than great revenues.**” “**By means of,**” is sometimes translated “*with*” (E. V.). It makes very

good sense:—"Better is a little with righteousness" (E. V.). But it makes a great deal more sense, to retain the commoner rendering of the preposition. All that is good is "*by means of righteousness*"; and all the luxury, that comes by any thing else, will blight and curse, because it is "*not a judgment*." Solomon, having enounced this marvellous dependance (v. 8), and that "*righteousness*" is at the mere pleasure of Heaven (v. 7), turns back, finely fortified, to the original idea (v. 1):—

- 9 The heart of a man devises his way ;

but Jehovah plants his step.

⁹ A man's heart deviseth his way : but the L O R D directeth his steps.

The thought of the first verse coming, therefore, to be repeated, this versatile Sentence-Maker calls it back with different scenery. The "*decree of a tongue*" (v. 1) is one pregnant act; the "*step*" of a foot is another. Both may make a man, or ruin him; for this world, or that which is to come. The critical thing, in either case, is controlled by the Almighty. It does not make the doctrine stronger, but, to seem stronger, that men do not lie differently in Jehovah's loom, let them counsel as they please.* "**H**eart;" more intellectual than the English, *heart*. "**D**evises;" too intellectual for our *emotional nature*. It means *studies*, or *deeply meditates*. The sinner really *reflects* upon his future wisdoms. Alas! they are too future! And, when the future comes, he "*plants*," literally, *sets firm* "*his step*," quite differently from what he had decreed.

The glaring fact of what Solomon avows, can be seen in the instance of "*a king*." All personages are alike. All Providences are entire. All movements, though they be movements of an ant, must be in maps before the Almighty. But a weak mind sees best in the instance of "*a king*." The word of a king can ruin France, and change the whole system of the world.

* We shudder at the doctrine that is stated sometimes in the way of caricature, that "if a man is born to be lost, he will be lost, let him do what he will," because, if he "will" do what he ought, and roll his works in the direction of the Almighty (see v. 3), he will be saved. But, if it be said, that if a man is born, he is born to a certain course, and will run that course; "*let him do what he will*," becomes redundant. For, whatever a man *wills*, is for God's purpose (v. 4). He has known it from the very beginning; and, with the punctuality of the stars, the sinner sets his foot in the way that it has been foreseen.

How, possibly, could God govern, unless He could a king? Eternal ages will not get over the edict of a prince; and the banded universe will feel its differences. Must not God control that word? Our passage answers, that He does:—

- 10 There is a divination on the lips of a king;
his mouth is not treacherous in judgment. | 10 A divine sentence
is in the lips of the king; his mouth trans-
gresseth not in judg-
ment.

He may be George the Third, of the low forehead: his speech is shaped omnisciently. He may be as “treacherous” as Charles: he does not betray, by a hair, the counsel of the Almighty. This is grand thought. A poor princeling may be governed by a girl; and yet, though his utterance might move the globe, we need have no fear. “There is a divination,” i. e., an oracle, behind “his lips.” He says what God pleases. And, though “his mouth” may have the very treachery of the cup, it has no treachery, even to a grain, to the plans of the All Wise.

If such be God’s power, how can He be just? A Proverb is quite as strong in that direction:—

- 11 The balance and scales of judgment are Jehovah’s;
His work is all the stones of the bag. | 11 A just weight and
balance are the [LORD’s; all the weights
of the bag are his work.

He is not only just, but Justice belongs to Him. He is not only partly just, but “His work” (and we see at a glance, that God’s “work” is the total universe) is, in its very self considered, “all the stones of the bag.” “Stones;” better weights than iron, because not altering by rust. “Bag;” in which the stone weights were carried in the peripatetic barter of the old trades-people. No difficulty should be had in understanding all of which the sentence is capable. God’s “work” is justice; and justice is His “work.” The very ideas of equity sprang out of the Eternal Mind.

- If all this were not so, how could God govern the creation:—
- 12 It is an abomination to kings to do wickedness;
for in righteousness a throne is set firm. | 12 It is an abomina-
tion to kings to commit
wickedness; for the
throne is established by
righteousness.

This is true of earthly monarchies. “A throne,” without some equity in it, could not last an instant. If it were unmiti-

gatedly bad, it would be swept out of existence.* The strength of a bad "*throne*" is precisely that part of it that is just. But if this be true of a world's "*throne*," where it has been seen that God governs as well as the king, how not of a divine throne, that rests solely on the Maker? It is impossible to conceive of a universe without justice, or of anything so complicated being eternally possible, without every sort of harmony, and especially that sort which is the highest and the best. Hence, many of the expressions in the eighth chapter. "Jehovah got possession of me as the beginning of His way" (v. 22). "I came to be by the side of Him, a builder" (v. 30); the personage, intended, being personified Wisdom, which is holiness or moral light, and which includes all the attributes of justice.

So, too, while a just God is necessary, a just creature is unspeakably acceptable to Him in the creation:—

13 A pleasure to kings are lips of righteous-
ness;
and he who speaks right, is loved. 13 Righteous lips are
the delight of kings;
and they love him that
speaketh right.

There never was a kingdom so corrupt that its courts of justice were not used, in the main, against wickedness. There never was a Nero, or a Borgia, who, on the very account of his own crimes, did not find crime sore, and a trouble to him, in those about him. It is one of the strangest miracles of Omnipotence, that a universe can take in transgression, and yet last. And, while God has made even the wicked "for his decree" (v. 4), yet "**a pleasure to kings are lips of righteousness; and he who speaks right, is loved.**"

The madness of opposing "**a king**," and, especially, **THE KING**, is next insisted on:—

14 The wrath of a king is death's messengers;
and a wise man will get it covered. 14 The wrath of a
king is as messengers
of death: but a wise
man will pacify it.

Give a "*king*" all the power, and give him untempered "**wrath**," and what chance can the subject have? "He, in whose hands thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways," can

* A king must be just to his people, or else to his soldiers, who support him against his people. His strength is justice, somewhere.

not begin to be angry, without the “**death's messengers**” being already on their path.

And so of His love:—

- 15 In the light of a king's countenance is life; and his favor is as the cloud of the latter rain. | 15. In the light of the king's countenance is life; and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain.

The idea, that Solomon intends, is the obvious policy for a wise man, if he have a Creator, to be His friend; if he have incurred wrath, to “**get it covered**” (v. 14); if there be a chance for “**favor**,” to win it at every hazard. For what “**the latter rain**” was in an Eastern season, God's “**favor**” is, in the seed-time of our being; decisive of “**life**,” and never, in any after time, to be dispensed with, or recalled.

Therefore:—

- 16 To get wisdom, how much better than gold! and to get discernment to be chosen rather than silver! | 16. How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!

Not *wisdom*, but, “**to get wisdom.**” Wisdom, itself, is glorious. Wisdom in God is above all praise. It will be the gem of Paradise. It will be the grand opulence of the family in the skies. But what the great preacher would confine us to in the language of the text is, our *getting* wisdom, as the evangelical condition; our *getting it*, moreover, in time, like “**the latter rain**,” so as to be in season for the crop; for, as a former sentence urges (4:7),—“As the chiefest thing in Wisdom, get wisdom.” Because, “what shall it profit a man to gain the whole world,” if God is his “**king**,” and “**the wrath of the king**” makes all His Providences but “**messengers**” of gloom (v. 14)?

- 17 The highway of the upright is the departing from evil. | 17. The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.

He that guards his soul, watches his way.

“**The highway;**” a way *cast up*. Such ways were convenient in the East; first, for being found; second, for being travelled.

“Departing from evil” is a way that opens itself as we press on. One evil, cured, like the big coal lump in the digging, clears the way to another. So much (1) for its being found; then (2) as to its being travelled; conceive of how a man could get to heaven except on such a “high-way.” We can not move nearer except on some sort of *way*. There is no sort of way, except the discipline of wisdom. There is no discipline of wisdom, except “*the departing from evil.*” The only thing a soul can do for itself under the grace of the Spirit, is, to exercise itself unto godliness (1 Num. 4:7). And, therefore, the last clause is important, which intimates the fact, that we can not **guard our souls** directly: that we *watch our souls* by **watching our way**; and, that the plan to fit a lost spirit for Paradise, is, under the grace of the Redeemer, to observe its steps; and to see that, one by one, they are taken, so as to *depart from evil*.

Men will do this when humbled. They will never do it, till they feel their need:—

- | | |
|--|---|
| 18 Before ruin is pride;
and before a fall a haughty spirit.
19 Better is it to be humble of spirit with the
afflicted,
than to divide the spoil with the proud. | 18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.
19 Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud. |
|--|---|

“**Before.**” This is not *before* (Gen. 2:5), expressive of time, but the word, *in the presence of*, or *before*, in a *confronting*, or a *local* sense. Gesenius treats it as though in these cases it were, simply, temporal. But, after regarding them all, we believe there can be no doubt that the *local*, or *confronting* sense is to be, also, retained. The word is used where there is to be a noticed contrast. “**Before ruin, is pride;**” that is, *in the very presence of* “ruin;” when its terror-fit has come, “pride” is to appear as the wretched cause of it. It would emasculate the sentence, to use, for either clause of it, the other word. Amos 1:1, “The words of Amos two years before the earthquake,” i. e., uttered so, that when the earthquake came, they confronted and explained it. Is. 18:5, “For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off, etc.;” plainly, one fact con-

fronting another. Gen. 13:10. "Well watered everywhere before the Lord destroyed Sodom;" one great fact signalizing, and giving moral weight to the other. Gen. 29:26, "It must not be so done in our country to give the younger before the first born;" that is in her very face. Prov. 8:25, "Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth;" to be ready for, and to stand confronting these great events. Deut. 33:1, "Blessed the children of Israel before his death;" i. e., in view of his death. 1 Sam. 9:15, "The Lord had told Samuel before Saul came;" that is, in view of his coming, that he might be ready for it. These are nearly all Gesenius' cases. I do not deny a temporal meaning; but affirm only that the rest is mixed with it;—that the moral is chosen for these strong, or solemn, contrasts; that it never occurs without some evidence of this; and that, here, *pride comes before ruin* in the sense of *confronting* it; just as the words of Amos *faced* the earthquake, and as the well-watered valley *contrasted* the waste to which God reduced Sodom and Gomorrhah. (1), Contrast; (2) precedence of time; and (3) palpable occasion, are all included in the instance of this text. V. 19. "**Afflicted**;" means sometimes, "*lowly*" (E. V.). It might seem to balance best in this sense "*the proud*," in the second clause. But it will be seen that the really balancing idea is "*the spoil*." The meaning is,—if "*pride*" is to be confronted by "*ruin*" (v. 18), it is better to have *affliction*, and be "*humble*," than to have "*spoil*" and be "*proud*." "*Spoil*," in these evangelical senses, is worldly wealth, or "*what is Another Man's*."

Humility does not forbid a man's looking out for himself. In fact, the humblest "**trust**" is consistent with the most sagacious trading. Solomon teaches this, condensed with that previous special marvel (15:23), how much the "*humble*" may snatch for himself in a single venture!—

20 He that is wise, may, for one act, find good;
so he that casts himself on Jehovah, blessed
is he!

20 He that handleth
a matter wisely shall
find good; and whose
trusteth in the LORD
happy is he.

Literally, "*wise about a word*;" by usage, "*wise about a thing*;" hence, "*shrewd, though it be but in one transaction*." How often

in London might mansions be pointed out of men opulent at a stroke! Such a stroke is faith! See the same marvel in chap. 18: 21. What a wonder is it that a man can win palaces of light by “one act” of casting himself upon the Sacrifice. “Act,” literally, *word*. But men acted so by the *word* in that country, that it grew to mean, “affair” (Gen. 20: 8). The very name of Christ (Jo. 1: 1) seems to be colored by this Eastern usage. “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made” (Ps. 33: 6). “Blessed;” in every sense whatever. What other “affair” ever produced as much as the “affair” of faith? (Mark 9: 23).

The praise of wisdom is interrupted for a moment to tell how it gains by “sweetness:”—

- 21 The wise in heart get the name of being discerning:
but sweetness of lips makes a lesson better taken.

21 The wise in heart shall be called prudent; and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.

Piety is sure to be discovered; but many a pious man has less influence for want of courtesy. The *suaviter* may be really stronger than the *fortiter*. “**Makes a lesson better taken**” is really but two words:—one, *increases*, or, *adds to*, and the other, *a taking*, from the verb to *take*. This noun is often translated “*learning*” (E. V.), (see 1: 5). *A taking* may very legitimately be “*a lesson*.” The idea is, that sweet lips *increase the taking*, i. e., make more wisdom to be taken by the men around. The duty, therefore, is evolved, of being kind in speech that our good may not be evil spoken of (Rom. 14: 16).

No such *suaviter*, however, can ever avail in any influence attempted upon the depraved:—

- 22 A fountain of life is wisdom to him who has any;
but the discipline of fools is folly.

22 Understanding is a well-spring of life unto him that hath it; but the instruction of fools is folly.

“**A fountain of life;**” that is, a perpetual flow of increasing blessing. “**Is wisdom.**” That is to say; piety never ceases, and never ceases to bless, and never ceases to increase in blessing. In this last particular it goes beyond the figure of a fountain. “**To him who has any;**” literally, “*to its master*” (see 1: 19). “**But**

the discipline ;" i. e., the same outward chastisement that is applied to a wise man ; "of fools ;" i. e., applied to the impenitent. "is folly ;" i. e., amounts to that in every way we could possibly understand. First, it "*is folly*," in itself. Though it reaches the wise as "*wisdom*," yet it is understood by the fool as "*folly*." He cannot discern it (1 Cor. 2:14); so, second, it *breeds folly*. It makes the impenitent man more impenitent; because "the letter killeth" (2 Cor. 3:6); and, of course, thirdly, it transmutes itself into more "*discipline* ;" for the folly of fools brings upon them fresh distress, and becomes itself a further scourge.

Let not the "*sweetness*" spoken of in a recent verse, be supposed to be altogether from nature. It flows eminently from being "*wise*." The highest sort of Christianity is a courtesy that never flags; and piety has a wonderful rhetoric :—

- 23 A wise heart gives subtlety to its mouth; | ²³ The heart of the
and upon its lips makes a lesson to be bet- wise teacheth his
ter taken. mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.

"*Its* ;" i. e., *the heart's*; it means, therefore, the man's;— and occurs, of like sense, in both the clauses. "**Makes**, etc."; the same seven words used in expressing two, as in verse 21st. Prayer is a wonderful heightener of speech; not only in making it more eloquent, but in sending before it the blessing of the Almighty. So of all pious acts.

Spoken "*words*," when, for any cause, they happen to be "*sweet*," are singularly potent. Even if they be worldly, they both please, and strengthen :—

- 24 A flow of honey are words of pleasantness, | ²⁴ Pleasant words
sweet to the soul, and healing to the bone. | are as an honey-comb,
sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

They often lift a man quite out of serious distress. "**Bone**" always means our innermost and substantial being (Ps. 35:10; Jo. 19:36). Firm men, and that in the most solid sense, are often lifted quite up by *a pleasant word*. But Solomon is aiming at religion. "*Sweet*" voices there, are heavenly. He who by kind speech entices the lost, is, indeed, like "*honey*" to the *lip*, and like "*healing to the bone*."

With no very traceable connection, Solomon begins a new subject by repeating the Proverb 14:12. At such places, perhaps, chapters should begin:—

- 25 There is a way that seems right to a man; but its after part are the ways of death. |²⁵ There is a way
that seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death.

“Seems right” is, “right” before him, or, *in his estimate*. “After part;” not “end” (E. V.). It is not dexterous figurative speech to speak of a man’s “end” as “ways.” Literally, “its afterwards.” “Ways of death.” The sense is, *ways to death*.

“Death,” then, a masculine noun, is what the pronoun in the next verse alludes to:—

- 26 The laboring soul labors for it; for its mouth imposes it upon him. |²⁶ He that laboureth,
laboureth for himself; for his mouth craveth
it of him.

“Laboring.” The “way that seems right to a man,” involves those honest toils, which appear to the mass of the impenitent to be the most praiseworthy of their attributes of life. “For it;” that is, for “death!” (v. 25). The translation heretofore has been, “for himself” (E. V.). And I confess there are likelihoods that would oppose the change. In the first place, it throws two Proverbs together. In these chapters of the book they are generally isolated. In the second place, it throws pronouns farther from their base. Thirdly, it mixes them. In the second clause, singular suffixes, both being masculines, must seek for themselves different nouns. In the fourth place, it is a bold version. Nevertheless we feel forced to choose it; because the old understanding seems meaningless, and has no connection in the context. The difficulties marked above are not absolute. Moreover, Solomon himself, in a passage equally misunderstood, (because all versions turn it as they do this) gives us a precedent for the like play of the Hebrew, along with the plausibility of the like mistake. It is Eccles. 6:6, 7. It stands, in the English Version,—“Do not all go to one place? All the labor of a man is for his mouth.” It is a simpler sen-

tence than ours; and, therefore, the new version can be made more palpably to appear:—"All the labor of a man is for *its* mouth." The whole passage then reads thus:—"Do not all go to one place? All the labor of a man is for its mouth, and yet the appetite (literally, *soul*; sometimes, *maw*, or *throat*, as Is. 5: 14) is not full." The old rendering is inane, because it has no connection. This seizes us almost as soon as it is uttered; and yet, if such be the sense, it is hard to turn the text now before us, from the same idea. The meaning then would be, that the, seeming, innocent man, being yet a really guilty one (verse 25th), is on the way to "*death*," and, that that death swallows everything; that, if he "*labors*," he "*labors for it*," because, as the other passage expounds it, all goes down into its maw "*Death*" itself "*imposes*" the labor; for, if he were not dead, he would not be so saddled. It is the very power of "*death*" that "*imposes it upon him*." The idea is that of a *pack* bound on, or the *strapping* of a *mule's burden*. "*Death*" binds the load; and the most moral impenitent is harnessed into an unprofitable toil.

But the Wise Man paints gloomily. For that end, verse 25th was brought back, and he unites, now, four verses. He foregoes isolated shapes, and throws four interdependently together. The first has a participle. It, therefore, serves as a preface. The others have future verbs, and carry on the connection. The whole has a simple grammar, and yields its sense to the most easy and to the most artless exposition:—

- 27 A worthless man, digging up evil,
and having upon his lips as it were burn-ing fire,
- 28 as a mischievous man, spreads discord,
and, as a talker, separates away a friend;
- 29 as a man of violence, seduces his neigh-bour;
and leads him in a way not good.
- 30 Shutting his eyes to devise mischiefs,
pressing his lips, he has already accom-plished evil.

27 An ungodly man diggeth up evil; and in his lips there is as a burning fire.

28 A froward man soweth strife; and a whisperer separateth chief friends.

29 A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way that is not good.

30 He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass.

"**A worthless man.**" This is the farthest an impenitent

moralist will go in condemning himself. He may be a “*worthless man*” (*a man of Belial*, i. e., *of no profit*); but he is not a harmful man. Solomon has met all this in a previous passage (6:12-14). He now repeats it. A mere *naughty man*, i. e., *a man of naught*, is a terrible injury. “**Digging up evil.**” In a still earlier text (4:16), he said, “For the mere reason that they sleep not, rest assured they do mischief.” Now, he speaks stronger, and calls this mild gracelessness—a *digging up of evil*. Recurring to the potency of the tongue, he says,—the “*lips*” of such men, sweet as they may seem, fairly scorch and *burn*. Nay, their very silence works like a malignant speech. He would signalize the potency of every example. And then, on the tide of assault, he grows fiercer (v. 28). “**As a mischievous man;**” literally, *subversive*. Impenitent guilt would upset the world. “*As an upturning man*,” the impenitent, *mere exemplo*, “*spreads discord*.” “**And as a talker;**” literally, *rolling out rapidly*. The idea is,—Sin cannot keep silence. In its quiet hour it speaks, *rolling out* articulate influences. The very idea is terrible. It “*separates away a friend*.” That is, the world being knit together by the law of love, the impenitent separate it asunder. They separate man from his race, and destroy that highest friendship that he might have with the Almighty. They *spread discord*. And, hence, another sketch:—V. 29. “**As a man of violence.**” This might seem rhetorically excessive, but so do words of Christ (Matt. 12:34; Jo. 10:8). Unbelief can hardly be libelled, and Solomon’s very thought is, to show how *violent* it is! It is the match even of hell; for it derides it! It is the robber even of God; for it thieves from Him. It takes life without paying for it. It assaults the Maker upon His throne. It stares broadly at the truth each Sunday when it listens, and flouts it, as though never heard. Unbelief is “*violence*.” And yet, as though it were the most seductive charm, it “*seduces (one’s) neighbor, and leads him in a way not good*.” Examples of that bold contempt are the most contagious of moral influences. For, to avoid all possibility of mistake (v. 30), his conduct may be of the most quiet kind. “**Shutting his eyes to devise mischief.**” All this was pictured in the other passage (6:12-14). That is,

pressing the lids together, as men do when they are merely meditating gravely. “**Pressing his lips**,” with that compressed thought which these gestures so thoroughly make appear. The man has done his mischief, even before any overt act. “**Already.**” This is the force of the perfect as among futures (see the remarks 14 : 1). The meaning is, example it is impossible to repress. Men will get it from us, even when we are not aware of it ourself. It steals into our very look. It lies in our very negligence to act. It swarms about the very cast of the eye. He who *presses his lips* in some inarticulate design, is watched by some poor tempted child, and “**has already accomplished evil.**”

If an amiable impenitence is so terribly subversive, of course a long life of it can hardly grow into honor:—

31 Grey hair, to be a crown of glory, | 31. The hoary head
is a crown of glory, if
it be found in the way
of righteousness.
must be found in the way of righteousness.

If unbelief surrounds itself with mischiefs, the sooner it is off the stage the better. Long life adds to its horrors. Old men are the bane and the pest. Suppose this could be written on their sepulchres! The fathers of the hamlet, who lie in the church-yards! how this would change their epitaphs! If the very glance of their eye spread mischief (v. 30), how long were these men at their deadly work! How precious, therefore, being a Christian!

And how hard to be:—

32 He that is slow to anger, is better than the | 32. He that is slow to
anger is better than the
mighty; and he that
ruleth his spirit than he
that taketh a city.
mighty;
and he that rules his spirit, than he that
takes a city.

It may be harder to keep from toppling from a precipice, than to lift, by sheer strength, our body over a wall. The reason is obvious. A feather might keep our balance, so we could lean and be safe; but the difficulty is, where to get it. We have strength enough, if we only had wherewithal it could be applied. The difficulty of *ruling our spirits* is, that they are ourselves. The difficulty of an inebriate in resisting a desire,

is,—that it is his desire. What can he resist it with? It might be far slighter, and yet, if there be nothing to oppose, like the slight weight that topples one upon the Alps, it is as sure to ruin him as a thousand tons.

How blessed the fact, that all things are determined by the Almighty! Graver things have been adduced (vs. 9, 10). The Wise Man finishes with lighter things. He asserts a divine direction for that which is most given up to the control of chance:—

33 The lot is cast into the lap;
but its whole judgment is from Jehovah.

33 The lot is cast
into the lap; but the
whole disposing there-
of is of the Lord.

“**Lap**;” literally, *bosom*: a bosom, however, more extensive than in our language; and including all the front folds of the person and the dress. To *lie in one's bosom* (2 Sam. 12:3), in those days of loose dress, meant to lie in one's whole embrace. It included the “*lap*.” It meant only the “*lap*,” when lots are said to be cast into it, and more the “*lap*” than (Anglice) *bosom*, when gifts were poured in (Is. 65:6, 7), or when, for that purpose, a man was said to open his bosom. The substantive, “*lot*,” has an irregular and accusative look and connection (see the Hebrew); but it does not alter the sense. “*Disposing thereof*” (E. V.): literally, “*judgment*.” So we translate it; as though the lot were a magistrate upon the bench. The lot often gave weighty decisions (Acts 1:26). “**Whole**;” every corner of the decision. Its whole banded consequences are ordered by “**Jehovah**.”

CHAPTER XVII.

1 Better is a dry morsel and quietness | BETTER is a dry
therewith,
than a house full of contentious feasts.

morsel and quietness
therewith, than an
house full of sacrifices
with strife.

THERE are eight of these Proverbs, and, including Ecclesiastes, twelve, in which “the fear of Jehovah” (15:16), “love” (15:17), “righteousness” (16:8), “wisdom” (16:16), “in-

tegrity " in one's " walk" (19:1; 28:6), nearness in a neighbor (27:10), " quietness " (Ec. 4:6), even a child's wisdom (Ec. 4:13), " the sight of the eyes " (Ec. 6:9), and " the end of a thing " (Ec. 7:8), are all praised, as " better," though accompanied with very little, than the opposite states, with very much. In this verse, the " better" thing is " quietness," a word from a root that means, to be *lax*, or, *relaxed*, and, hence, to be *at ease*, or *secure*. In the world, the maxim would teach, that the plainest life, with " quietness" and peace, is " better" than the daintiest establishment, with constant quarrels. " **A dry morsel;**" as in contrast with the usual sop loved in the East (Jo. 13:26). " **Feasts;**" literally, *killings* (Is. 34:6); usually, *sacrificial killings* (Lev. 19:6); and, as *peace sacrifices* (Lev. 3:1), comprising always a part that by law was to be eaten by the offerer (Lev. 19:6); hence the base of great family banqueting (Prov. 7:14). We thought, at first, that it alluded to the atonement, (literally, the *sacrifices of strife*), the meaning being, that the simplest life of positive obedience, was better than the joys and sorrows of sinning and repenting. That would be too art-like, however. " *Killings*" may mean ordinary slaughterings (not in many passages, perhaps; but see Zeph. 1:7); and " *killings of strife*," like " *killings of joy* " (Ps. 27:6), mean, not what *strife gives*, any more than what *joy gives*, but, more simply " *contentious* (like *joyous*) *killings*." Spiritually, therefore, as Solomon intends, the Proverb teaches, that the poorest earthly bestowments, with love and quiet faith (15:17), are better than the most splendid " *feasts*," and strife with each other and our Maker.

Again; piety as a simple service, is better than blood, or an imagined birthright in the church :—

- 2 A wise servant shall have rule over the son
of one who causes shame,
and in the very midst of the brethren shall
share the inheritance.

2 A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.

Eliezer will show the custom that suggests the type. He was " **a wise servant.**" Abraham thought he would have to be his heir (Gen. 15:2, 3). All commentators put " **son** " in ap-

position with him “**who causes shame**;” i. e., make them the same person. But, to be the same person, they should be in the same form grammatically (see 4:3); and “*son*” is in the construct. The *causer of shame*, therefore, is the father. And this is more consistent; for a wise father could uphold a son, or could give the “*inheritance*” to the other “*brethren*.” In the worldly sense there can be no difficulty. In the spiritual, what noted instances!—in the Israelites, who, unlike Abraham, failed to command their households (Gen. 18:19), and who gave place to their bought servants, the hated Gentiles!—in Satan, who has given place to man (Ps. 8:2)!—in modern men, who have professed the faith, but have debauched their children, till they see them hardening under their very eyes, and some far off waif gets before them into the everlasting kingdom. Better, says the last Proverb, the utmost poverty, with peace and love; better, says this Proverb, the poorest hold upon the church, if there be the humbler hold upon the service of the Most High.

Because, really, the “*dry morsel*” (v. 11) and the *servant's lot* (v. 2) may be our happiest discipline:—

- 3 The fining pot for silver, and the furnace
for gold,
and Jehovah as trier of hearts.

3 The fining-pot is
for silver, and the fur-
nace for gold: but the
Lord trieth the hearts.

“Behold I have refined thee but not with *silver*” (Is. 48:10); literally, *in silver*, and (\sqcap essentiae) like. Grace points out a difference. Silver is refined by getting the silver out from among the dross. Christians are refined by putting the silver in among the dross, and refining the dross away. Men in a natural state are not an ore of silver, but are dross, and they are nothing else. He who sits to purify them (Mal. 3:3), does not disengage the gold, but supplies it as He goes along. In other respects, however, the emblem is complete. (1) “*The furnace*” takes out the dross. So does “**Jehovah**.” (2) “*The furnace*” burns out the dross. So does Jehovah, with biting flames. (3) “*The furnace*” is a gradual worker. So is God. (4) In both processes there is the same mixture of **trying** and **refining**, **testing** and **purifying**, **watching** and **going on with the**

work, which appear, both together, whenever this emblem is presented in the Bible. Not that God needs so much to try us, but to show us to ourselves, which is itself a part of our most effective sanctification.

What thorough dross man is, appears in the wonder that follows:—

- 4 An evil doer gives heed to a worthless lip. | 4 A wicked doer giv-
A lie listens to a reckless tongue. eth heed to false lips;
and a liar giveth ear to
a naughty tongue.

A man most mischievous himself, yields most mischievously to the mischief of other sinners. “**A lie**” is the most weakly credulous. This is often noticed among the earthly. The biter is often most bit: the tyrant most tortured. The cunning is often most caught; and, what is singularly the fact, the skeptic is often the most believing. It is not a complete Proverb though for earth, because it is not universal. It is spiritually, as with all these other texts, that the truth has no exception. The greatest harm doer is Satan; and so the greatest harm done is to Satan. He is the father of lies, and has been most lied to. He was more deceived in Eden than his victim, and on Calvary than the men who crucified their Lord. And all his followers, while, as we have seen, the mildest of them have fire upon their lips (16:27); yet, take from the world equal mischiefs with that which they inflict upon it. “**An evil doer;**” Hiphil participle of the verb *to be evil*. “**Gives heed;**” attends closely to. “**Worthless;**” one of the favorite epithets for Sin. The word is a noun, however: “**a lip**” of worthlessness; “**naught-y**” lips, as the old English would most correctly express it. The care to put “**a liar**” (E. V.) in the second clause to correspond with “**an evil doer**” in the first, (Zöckler, Maurer, De Wette) is not necessary, and the like mars the sense of many of these Proverbs* (12:27; 18:3). On the contrary, to have

* As an instance of this useless care, we quote, in full, Zöckler's critical note on Chap. 18:3. “Instead of יְלָשֵׁן we shall be obliged with I. D. Michaelis, Hitzig, Umbreit, etc.,

to point יְלָשֵׁן as the parallel, גַּדְעָן (i. e., infamy, infamous conduct, turpitude) indicates.” A like hermeneutics would forbid a man, who is to be translated, ever to use such idiomatic expedients for strength. If Solomon meant to say יְלָשֵׁן why not the Masorites? Ought not the translation to preserve the original as much as our tongue permits?

the abstract in the second clause, is a habit of Solon on, and adds intensiveness to the growing sense. Which is the stronger, God is a Lover, or "God is love"? It is meant to be intense that the very "*lie*," itself, in its very nature of being a lie, opens itself, in turn, to all other deceivers. "**Reckless**;" from a verb originally *to breathe after*, hence *to desire*, hence *to go headlong*. "**Naughty**" (E. V.) comes as we have seen, by another route, and would better translate the other expression (1st clause).

One of the "*reckless*" things a man does, is to think triflingly about "**the poor**." They are God's creatures. They are created just as they are for God's decree (16: 4). They are created partly for our discipline. The relations of poor and rich are close with themselves, and close with their "**Maker**." All life is, therefore, solemn. The **mocker** forgets himself, being profane as well as heartless. And when he goes farther, and, comfortably housed, "**is glad**" when he looks out upon distress, it presents a picture of guilt that is sure not to "**go unpunished**":—

- 5 He that mocks the poor man, scorns his
 Maker.
He that is glad of calamity, shall not go
 unpunished.
Whoso mocketh
 the poor reproacheth
 his Maker; and he
 that is glad at calamities
 shall not be unpunished.

For, in truth, the whole family of man might be the joy and the honor of each other. These are pregnant texts; and one stroke is intended for a whole assemblage of relations. That of parent and child is intended to embody others in Scripture. And so, as in another place (22: 6, 7), the "*poor*" being spoken of, a parental reference is made to throw its light as though over a like relation:—

- 6 The crown of old men are children's chil-
 dren;
and the glory of children are their fathers.
Children's children
 are the crown of old
 men; and the glory of
 children are their fa-
 thers.

In heaven, where things will be most clearly seen, the "*poor*" we have helped will be our ornament; and we, whom they have meekly thanked, and from whom they have humbly taken, will

have been a spiritual benefit to *them*. All the relations of life will be each other's joy ; and all the fidelities they have bred, will be each other's ornament. So that all the Providences of pain that throw the poor more completely on the rich, and the young more completely on the "old;" yea, and the "*old*" more completely on the young, instead of being *mocked* at (v. 5), should be looked on as a **glorious** plan, both for life and honor.

The lost cannot understand such things :—

7 Excellent speech is not agreeable to the base, | 7 Excellent speech
for the same reason also that lying speech | becomes not a fool;
is not to the noble. | much less do lying lips
a prince.

"**Excellent**;" literally, *something over, abundant*; then, *profitable*; then, *excellent*. These ancient roots connect sin very much with *profitlessness*. "**Speech**;" literally, *lip*. "**Is agreeable to**;" not "*becometh*" (E. V.). It is from another verb meaning *to desire*. Excellent speech *becomes* anybody, saint or sinner. "**Base**." This is one of three words usually translated "*fool*" (E. V.). But they are all different. One is from a word meaning to be *turned away, to be perverse*, and we translate that "*fool*" (10:10). One is from a verb meaning *to be fat*, and we translate that "*a stupid man*" (v. 16). The other is from a verb meaning *to wilt, wither, or fall away*; in the Pihel, *lightly to esteem*. It is the word we are considering. It was the name of Nabal, precisely, and without any change. We translate it *a base one* (v. 21); and it corresponds very well with "**the noble**" (2d clause), which means *munificent* or *generous*. All three mean the impenitent; but it is well to preserve them in their original distinctions. We come next to a good proof of the position taken, chap. 11:31. "*Much less*" (E. V.), instead of deriving proof from this text, would spoil it. The two words are "**also**" and ***because*** (see 17:7). We should derive out of them no other sense. They are intended to enforce a fact by saying, that another like fact is true "*also*," and "**for**" *a like reason*." And they could be illustrated nowhere better than at the point we have reached. The "**base**" hate what is "**excellent**"; and "**the noble**" hate what is false; and for the kindred reason :—men hate what is morally opposed to

them. The doctrine is very wide, and is, that men cannot appreciate, and, therefore, do not admire that moral life, which is either above or beneath them.

"Excellent speech," therefore, is a "gift," and a gift that has a distinct master. Other people cannot enjoy it. The inspired word, therefore, puts the article to the noun "gift" to give it this previous connection, and thus discourses upon it:—

- 8 The Gift is a precious stone in the eyes of | 8 A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes
him who has it: | of him that hath it;
whithersoever it turns it prospers. | whithersoever it turn-
eth, it prospereth.

This particular word "gift" meant something that bribed a man either fairly or foully. It is, therefore, a graver word than that for a usual present. It is a good word for grace, and a good word, even, in the worldly Proverb for that sort of "gift" that was looked to particularly to prosper. "Precious stone;" literally, "*stone of grace*:" this was the old expression. "Him who has it;" literally, "*its master*," (as in 1:19). None but "*its master*" in the sense of *him who gets it*, looks upon grace as a *precious gem*. "Whithersoever it turns." So is "*a precious stone*." So is a worldly "gift." It sparkles whithersoever you turn it. So, without the least exception, is The Heavenly "Gift." In whatsoever direction we may choose to turn it, "*it prospers*." "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

If there be a "Gift," however, all things depend upon the friendliness of the Giver:—

- 9 He that covers sin, seeks love; | 9 He that covereth a
but he who falls back into an act, drives | transgression seeketh
away a friend. | love: but he that re-
peateth a matter separ-
ateth very friends.

Solomon, in adopting this worldly maxim, takes it in all its naturalness. If one has been our enemy, it has been for some trespass. The best way to abate the enmity, is to *cover up*, and smother over, and thus erase from memory our act against him. He that does this, "*seeks love*." "He who falls back into" the wrong, i. e., *iterates*, or *doubles over* his offence, "*drives away*" everything. The verb means *to fold back*, or

double over, like the year, which, in Hebrew, is thus derived. Spiritually, a man is not to complain of the alienation of his Maker, if he willfully retain his sin. “*He that covers sin, seeks love.*” If God has given us a special way for *covering sin*, and we postpone it, and go tumbling back *into our acts*, the strife is ours. This special crime of relapsing after we have done better, of *falling back* after we have sought a *covering* for trespass, is signal for hardening the conscience, and fatal for *driving away a Friend.*” “*Drives;*” literally, *separates.* “*Act;*” literally, *word;* English Version, “*matter.*” The use of this noun for *affair, or matter,* is common through all the Bible (Gen. 20 : 8).

Anything better, however, is signally a “*gift*” (v. 8); for, while the man, “*who has it*” (v. 8), can be influenced by the slightest “*rebuke,*” the ordinary sinner cannot be stirred by the strongest discipline:—

10 Rebuke penetrates further into a discerning man
than a hundred stripes into a stupid one.

| 10 A reproof enter-
eth more into a wise
man than an hundred
stripes into a fool.

The cause is obvious. “*Rebuke*” requires a basis of conscience. The lost man has dim conscientious light. “*Penetrates;*” literally, *goes down into.* Not “*stripes,*” as a substantive, but the infinitive verb. “*Rebuke penetrates, etc.,*” more than *smiting one who is stupid a hundred;* in other words, ‘*giving him a hundred,*’ as we say. Discipline cannot save. It is only the Spirit. Discipline can but harden (Is. 1 : 5). God chooses to discipline as the instrument of “*the Gift*” (v. 8). But without “*the gift,*” “*though thou bray a fool in a mortar, in the midst of grits with a pestle, his folly shall not depart from him*” (27 : 22). “*Stupid;*” one of the three names for the impenitent (see v. 7).

Yet, though anything better is always a “*gift*,” still it is “*only*” voluntary and express “*rebellion*” that can prevent our getting it, a “*rebellion*” so spontaneous that it “*goes in search of evil:*”—

- 11 Only rebellion goes in search of evil,
and has a cruel messenger sent by its very self.

11 An evil man seeketh only rebellion; therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.

Observe the word ; not *wickedness* ; for all men are wicked ; not *impenitence* or *stupidity*, this time, but "*rebellion* ;" because there is nothing more voluntary. "*Only rebellion.*" If a man truly is not *rebellious*, he is sure of "*the gift.*" Solomon has weighed these words, and so did David in the sixty-eighth Psalm (v. 6). He is speaking of victory. Chains are to be shattered ; and there is a shout of universal celebration. Christ is in the car of triumph, and he is leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts as a man (in essentia). And then, narrowing down the sorrow to only one exception of the earth-wide gladness, he says,—"*Only the rebellious*" (our Versionists have translated "*but,*" but it is the very simplest "*only*") "*only the rebellious shall dwell in a dry place.*" Solomon now repeats the admonition. There are creatures in the universe that are actually "*in search of evil.*" There are men that are summoning "*a cruel messenger*" to be "*sent*" against themselves. They are not the wicked ; for thousands of wicked people are in glory. Nor the ignorant ; they are not the poor or the despised. They are not even the vicious ;—no ! not Jew or Gentile, bond or free. They are "*only the rebellious.*" A door of mercy ! and a ransom fixed for sin ! and only one class to fail ! and they spontaneously rebels ! These are the men that go "*in search of evil* ;" and this is the meaning of the Wise Man. The trumpet blast at the end they put to their own lips. The "*cruel messenger*" that shall be sent, they send. No Dry Tortugas for any of the rest. Their doom at last is the decision of their free impenitence

Therefore :—

- 12 Let a bear robbed of her cubs meet a man ; but not a fool his folly.

12 Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly.

For the "*fool*," O what a meeting ! when he has been robbed of every earthly chance ! and is dead eternally ! and the "*Folly*," that has robbed him, is shut up with him in everlasting misery !

How he will gnash his teeth at it! “*Fool;*” the stupid man (see v. 16). We translate “*fool,*” as demanded by the energy of the sentence. “*Folly;*” a different root (*perverseness*), and meant thus usually to be translated. “*In his folly*” (E. V.). There is a preposition before the word, and it has misled the commentators to translate it “*in*” (E. V.), and to spoil all the text. The whole is thus rendered vapid. The meeting of the “*fool*” and “*folly!*” is thrown out. The commentators have not, so much as one of them, observed it. The meeting of the “*fool*” is supposed to be with others, his folly making him dangerous; whereas the preposition **בְּ** is before “*man*” as well as before “*folly;*” and, in the usage of the language, is required by the verb to *meet*. “*Let a bear robbed, etc., meet in a man (or with a man) and not a fool in (i. e., with) his folly.*” “*Meet;*” literally, an infinitive; “*a meeting of a bear, etc.,*” (i. e., let that be) “*rather than of the fool, etc.*”

Not only will the fool himself glare madly at his own infatuation, but must, if he reason rightly, exonerate the Almighty:—

13 Whoso returns evil for good,
evil shall not depart from his house.

| 13 Whoso rewardeth
evil for good, evil shall
not depart from his
house.

The first clause describes sin as a rendering of “*evil for good,*” The last clause describes “*evil*” as, in that case, incapable of **departing from one's house.** If the only way to dislodge “*evil,*” is by “*good,*” and, instead of that, we meet “*good*” by “*evil,*” obviously “*evil*” must hold its ground. “*House;*” that is, all our interests. “*Evil*” must control the whole of them, because it refuses to be supplanted by “*good.*”

If such conduct is to cease at all, it were better that it cease at once. If a fool is to crush his folly, let him do it instantly. If good is ever to vanquish evil, let us claim it now. If any one dreams that, inasmuch as when God pleases, He makes even His enemies to be at peace with Him, He will do that for him, and that, therefore, he will some day seek this peace with his Maker, the Wise Man urges him, if that be his dependence, to let that day be to-day:—

- 14** A breaker of a way for waters is the beginning of strife; therefore break off contention before it pours forth.

14 The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water; therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.

As usual, there is a worldly and a spiritual application. Feuds grow. They are most manageable at first, and may be perfectly overwhelming afterward. A slight difference trickles the water over the dyke. It slowly widens, and then goes tumbling into a tide that laughs as "*it pours forth.*" But Solomon is thinking of an eternal quarrel. It begins with impenitency. It grows angry and inveterate with each refusal to be reconciled. "**Break off;**" literally, to *pound*, to *beat*. The implication is, that it requires an emphatic effort. The sinner, at any cost, should stop his great "**strife**," and "*break off contention*," before the crevasse goes widening into a perpetual overflow. "**A breaker of a way;**" not "*as when one, etc.,*" (E. V.), but a masculine participle, in apposition with "**the beginning**," which is feminine, but which is here personated as though it were a living agent. "*Pours forth;*" a verb much debated. Many prefer to render it "*grows hot*" (Umbreit). It occurs only in Hithpahel, only in Proverbs, and but three times altogether. We shall encounter, therefore, the other instances (18:1; 20:3). The meaning of *rolling forth* in a *rushing, tearing way* (as, for example, 18:1, where it is applied to eager selfishness), is best; and best also for the sense. "*Grows hot*" would be a very mixed metaphor, for we are already taken possession of by the figure of an incipient inundation.

Of two things the sinner may be entirely satisfied:—

- 15** He that makes the wicked righteous and he that makes the righteous wicked, even both of them are an abomination to Jehovah.

15 He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD.

"*Justifies*," in a Lutheran sense, is a word in no literature. The Hebrew means *make righteous*. If we translated it so, it would be understood. If I make a saint a thief, it will be seen that I am *making him out* one; that is all that is putative. When I justify myself (Lu. 16:15) or God (Lu. 7:29) or the wicked, I aver that we are actually righteous. I am not

imputing in a factitious way. Redemption is the forensic whole of our Redeemer's sacrifice. And though my righteousness be not righteousness, yet it is the budding of it; the pledge of more and better; the earnest of that which shall be perfect, and so determinate as between Christian and impenitent, that it fits a court proverb, "**He that makes, &c.**"

God cannot save, therefore, without *making us righteous*, and he cannot do that even in a small beginning without His sacrifice; but then, as we have His sacrifice, why not all be *made righteous?*—

- 16** Why is this?—a price in the hand of a
stupid man
to get wisdom; and no heart?
16 Wherefore is there
a price in the hand of a
fool to get wisdom, see-
ing he hath no heart
to it?

There can be no more radical perplexity. The gospel may be very complete, but what of that if we have "**no heart?**" This is the difficulty of difficulties. It will never be solved. What matters it to the lost man to have everything? Christ, and his cross, and his home, and his eternal glory, all purchased for him, and all easily within his offer, but "*heart*" necessary for its acceptance, and "*heart*" the gift of the Almighty, and "*heart*" not given? The man that could settle that question, could, I doubt not, out-think Gabriel. Solomon does not settle it. But, (as in all these sentences) he puts in great timbers of thought, which tend greatly to hold up our faltering, and strengthen our faith. Such are the next twelve Proverbs, which have, in all, more than usual mutual connection. For example, first:—

- 17** At all times the Friend loves;
and a brother is born for straitness.
17 A friend loveth at
all times, and a brother
is born for adversity.

Undoubtedly "*heart*" must be given, and to give "*heart*" (*Jer. 24:7*); to get possession of "*heart*" (*15:32*); and even to measure out "*hearts*" (*24:12*), are all expressions that are to be found in Scripture. Bright as the promise is, it is dead without "*heart*"; and God must give it. Now, as I say, Solomon cannot answer this question baldly; but he gives modify-

ing doctrines. In the first place, he insists upon the benevolence of God. He puts the emphatic characteristic first:—“**At all times.**” The sinner need not sit moodily to wait. “*At all times the Friend loves;*” the idea being:—“*heart*” must indeed be given, but the being that gives it, is a “*friend*;” He is not only a “*friend*,” when He chooses to be, but *He loves at all times*. And we have this fact administered to our unbelief, that, however we may ring the change upon our need of “*heart*,” and God only as bestowing it, nevertheless, we have this to keep the balance, that the God who bestows it, is always our “*Friend*;” that He is “kind even to the unthankful;” “not willing that any should perish;” desiring not the death of the sinner, but that all should turn to Him and live; and that if there be “**straitness**” in some of these hard doctrines of the cross, there is One “**born for**” this very thing, to relieve the *straitnesses* of our estate, and to bring us out into a large room. We are to notice *the article*. It does not impair the Proverb for its secular use. We have such an idiom; “*the friend*,” i. e., *the true friend*. Even a worldly *friend*, to be worth anything, must be for *all times*; and what is a *brother born for*, but *for distress*? But spiritually, the article is just in place. There is but One Only “*Friend*;” and a “*Brother*,” who would not have been “*born*” at all, but for the distress and “*straitness*” of His house.

And now another doctrine comes, which fits in on the other side of the difficulty. While the “*Friend*” is loving at all times, we are always welcoming our enemy. Why should we complain, if we are directly bargaining with him? Because, “wherefore should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin?” (Lam. 3:39).

18 A man without sense strikes hands,
assuming over again a suretyship in the
very presence of his Friend.

18 A man void of
understanding striketh
hands, and becometh
surety in the presence
of his friend.

Such Proverbs were explained earlier (6:1; 11:15). They forbid **suretyships**, and act as secular good sense in any of the Proverbs invented or selected by Solomon. But they illustrate one grand principle, that all the Proverbs are for a spiritual end.

Once in this book, all mere secularity is dismissed, and we must insist upon the religious purposes for which they were brought in. The “*friend*” in a former instance (6: 1), is God Almighty. The “*stranger*” is the fallen Adam. Our hope is to *urge* our Friend (6: 3-5); to fall at His feet, and take no denial, till He let us off; to give neither sleep to our eyes, nor slumber to our eyelids, till we have escaped as a roe from the hand, or as a bird from the hand of the fowler. This is our wisdom. Hence this Proverb recounts our folly; for the lost, day by day, goes and renews his bond, and that “**in the very presence of his Friend.**” One of these expressions is peculiar: “**Assuming over again a suretyship:**” literally, “*assuring a suretyship.*” The word “*suretyship*” is found but once anywhere else (1 Sam. 17: 18). The meaning of the verb and noun together, seems to be, the *reassuring of a surely, the repledging of a pledging*; in more modern phrase, *the renewing of a surely bond.* The sinner “*in the very presence of his Friend,*” i. e., in the very face of Christ, who would let him off, binds himself in, renewedly, under the old covenant; steps up, and takes everything on himself, as though it were a new obligation; and then complains of the Maker because He holds him to a bond, which he thus day by day has voluntarily reassumed. “**Sense;**” literally, “*heart,*” the very word used in starting the difficulty. We translate “*sense*” to express more definitely that want of the “*fool*” which the English word *heart* does not include in it. Perhaps it might be better always to translate “*heart.*”

The very cavils that the sinner makes, shows that he is not eager to depart out of iniquity. The cavils may be plausible; but the spirit is not honest with which they are entertained:—

19 He loves sin that loves contention;
and he that sets high his gate, seeks ruin.

19 He loveth transgression that loveth strife; and he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction.

“**Sets high his gate;**” a figure that is probably misunderstood. The version that has been given of it, is, that it means pride, that stately pageantry that carves and arches the ap-

proaches to a palace. The children have, perhaps, got it better :—

“Open the gates as high as the sky ;
To let King George and his troops pass by.”

It probably means *belligerence*. A moat, over which issued armed bands, with banners and mounted spearmen, required high space to let them go forth. “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, etc.” The soul that fixes itself that way against the Almighty, ready to march out upon Him on any occasion of quarrel, really “**seeks ruin.**” The closing verses (27, 28) advise silence and restraint. This is the opposite temper. The soul “*loves sin*” who hugs this “*contention*” with its Maker; and he that squares himself to meet every difficulty, and “*sets high his gate*” that he may march out at every occasion of debate, is really making certain his “*sin*,” and deliberately seeking “*ruin.*”

How much better to smooth down our difficulties, than to be out of harmony with the whole creation ! and what good can it do to set ourselves a-crook with the very universe to which we belong !—

20 The crooked in heart cannot find good; | 20 He that hath a
and he that is subversive in his tongue, | froward heart findeth
must fall as being an evil. | no good; and he that
hath a perverse tongue
falleth into mischief.

“*Crooked.*” That is the meaning of the root. “**Subversive;**” from a verb, *to turn over*. *Revolutionary*, we would say in civil matters. A man who is *revolutionary* in his speech, would “*fall*,” even under earthly governments, “*as being an evil.*” “*Into mischief*” (E. V.). None of the commentators translate as we do. The reason is, that there is the preposition “*in*.” The preposition *in* (Hebraice) may mean “*as*” (3:26; Ps. 39:6). It means “*as*” far more often than we have heretofore imagined. Translated “*into*,” it gives a very bald and vapid sense. Translated “*as*,” it gives a very striking one. It gives one coincident with the thought in hand. It makes the caviller perish out as a noxious thing. And it gives a meaning which has appeared already in this book (13:17), and which, in that

very much relieved and very much brightened passage, was also against the thought of all the expositions. Solomon, therefore, rebukes cavilling as unnatural and evil.

Now he turns to God :—

- 21** When one has a stupid child it is his sorrow ; | ²¹ He that begetteth
and he is not glad who is father of the base. | a fool doeth it to his
sorrow ; and the father of a fool hath no joy.

These fifth commandment Proverbs are very wide in their reaching. This, of course, has its secular sense, and a lower spiritual reality ; but its purpose, in this connection, is with our great “**Father**” in the Heaven. What would it profit Him to make us miserable ? Where is the gain to Him if we are impenitent or “**base**?” He tells us that He strives for our salvation (Job 7:18); that punishment is His strange work (Is. 28:21); that “He doth not afflict willingly” (Lam. 3:33); and that He yearns over us with tender regard, that all may come to the knowledge of the truth. This particular “timber” in the debate is, the demand upon the impenitent sinner,—what particular good it can be to his “**Father**” in the Heavens to keep him “**base**” or “**stupid**?”

If the lost really wish salvation, why not prefer the more cheerful side of the question of difficulty ?—

- 22** A glad heart helps forward a cure ; | ²² A merry heart
but an upbraiding spirit dries the bones. | doeth good like a med-
icine : but a broken spirit drieth the bones.

“**Cure.**” We had supposed it might be “*medicine*” (E. V.). Our idea was that of *helping a medicine, doing it good* (see 15:13), as the verb is strictly ; the idea being, that a *medicine*, which otherwise might be weak, “**a glad heart**” makes strong, and “**helps**” in its battle with the sickness. But the verb, which is its primary, means *to thrust away*, like bandages from a thorough “*cure*;” finally, it meant to *cure*, and, as far as we can fix it, the noun means, not a *medicine*, but a final “*cure*.” In the world at large, cheerfulness is an immense gift; but in religion, as the sixth of the twelve points he makes, the Wise Man wishes to say, that hopefulness is strength (Neh. 8:10); that it is better to look cheerfully upon God, than with com-

plaints; that if we are to be cured at all, "*a glad heart*" will "*help*" it; and that the "**upbraiding spirit**" (see the discussion about this, 15:13), literally, (Niphal causative) "*the spirit caused to be an upbraiding one*," i. e., this very cavilling spirit, "**dries the (very) bones**;" i. e., reaches the innermost life with its fatal influences.

If God were unjust to man, it would be very expensive to Him. If man be unjust to God, it is very expensive to him. The first must upturn a universe; the second, destroy a soul:—

- 23 A gift out of the bosom the wicked has to take to turn the paths of judgment. 23 A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.

Let us be careful in this quarrel. The unjust party has to pay for it. "**A gift**;" that sort of "*gift*" (v. 8) that is used as an inducement for something. "**Out of the bosom**," the front folds of the dress, including the "*lap*" (Ex. 4:6, 7), where lots were cast (16:33), and where presents were both received and brought (21:14). This need not be the version; for the same Hebrew might read,—"*A gift out of the bosom of the wicked he has to take, etc.*" The form of the noun (*bosom*) is good for each; the sense, for both; and it might read better impersonally, than either:—"It takes a gift out of the bosom of the wicked to turn aside the paths of judgment." We have no precedent, however, for such a use of **תְּבָנָה**; and the difference is not important. "**Judgment**" is a very fixed thing. To pervert it, and that remedilessly, would unfix creation.

Eighthly; God has a far better chance to know:—

- 24 Before the very face of the discerning is wisdom; but the eyes of the stupid are at the end of the earth. 24 Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.

Heaven is able to know so much more plainly than Hell! The very thing which is the best enlightener, the minds of Hell will be entirely without. "The depth saith, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not in me. Destruction and death say, We have heard the same thereof with our ears." Hell, there-

fore, will always cavil. If saints judge better than sinners, how much better God than saints! “**Wisdom is before (His) very face,**” while “**the eyes,**” not “**of the stupid**” only, but of Gabriel himself, must be, in the respect of the contrast, “**at the (very) end of the earth.**” “*At the end.*” Not in the middle, where the thing can be best judged, but at the dark extremity.

Ninthly; the old idea again of “**a father**” and “**a son;**” only heightened. It is “**vexation**” now; it was milder before (v. 21). Why should God, out of any wantonness, give birth to sinners?—

25 A vexation to a father is a stupid son,

and a grief to her who bare him.

| 25 A foolish son is a
grief to his father, and
bitterness to her that
bare him.

God breeds us more really ten thousand times than we do our children. We live in Him. He breeds us eternally. He brings us into being each morning. Why should He sustain, each patient moment a thing of sorrow? He cannot do it wilfully. And, therefore, this Proverb, woven in here on this fabric of defence, has an obvious use in making out the vindication.

Tenthly; cavils are natural to the fallen heart, for they reign even in the Christian:—

26 Even deserved punishment to the righteous does not seem good

when designed to chasten the willing with a view to holiness.

| 26 Also to punish the
just is not good, nor
to strike princes for
equity.

How densely this is put! “**Even.**” This seems to have been treated as a word *de trop*. King James' men make it “*also;*” as though Solomon grew tired of sameness, and broke the monotone by a new opening vocable. But with the above rendering it takes its usual sense. “**Punishment;**” literally, *imposition, or amercement.* “**Righteous.**” This word and “*punishment*” bear the weight of the word “*even.*” “*Even the righteous,*” who ought to know better; and “*even punishment,*” which the righteous at least ought to be willing to bear. Nothing is more natural than this picture of believers. But the text is stronger yet:—(1) “*Even punishment;*” (2) “*even*”

when sent upon "*the righteous* ;" (3) "*even*" when sent for chastisement, for the express purpose of making the good man better; even this, (so cavilling is the heart,) rarely *seems good* "*even*" to the Christian. Literally, "*is good*" (but see Gen. 16:6; 20:15; Deut. 23:16). "**When designed to;**" simply **בְּ** prefixed to an infinitive. "**Chasten;**" literally, *smite*. "**The willing.**" This is the primary meaning; usually, *generous*; hence, *noble*; so translated, v. 7. But to a Hebrew eye, "*willing*" was still the root; and here it is the better meaning. *The rebellious* have already been spoken of (v. 11). "*The willing*" are the saints; and, to smite "*the willing*," is a hard thing to be reconciled to, "*even*" though it be **בְּ**, i. e., *with a view to* (see Ps. 44:23), *uprightness* or "*holiness*." The preposition here is decidedly capable of such a meaning (see also Judges 9:17; Deut. 12:1). We rarely stop to notice other expositions, because the canvassing of our own usually includes what we could say against them.

Eleventhly; admitting, honestly, that there is still difficulty left (v. 16), what can we do better than be silent?—

27 He that restrains his words, knows knowledge;
and he that is cool in spirit, is a discerning man.

27 He that hath knowledge spareth his words; and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.

The words are precise. It is the fact that he "**knows knowledge**," that impels a man to **restrain his words**. If he did not know knowledge; if he had not light, and did not know it when he saw it; if he did not see light in God, and know it when he has seen it, and really see enough of it to convince him that "God is light," he could not stand the darkness. The unfortunates in hell have no light to help them to endure the dark. But the saint, *knowing knowledge*, and seeing that it exists in God, is balanced enough against the mysteries to enable him to **restrain his words**. "**Cool;**" from the verb, to be cold. "**Cool;**" not passionate, with "*a high gate*," ready to march out against the Most High.

So strong is this last point (wisely put the last, for it is the recourse of the Christian, when all reasonings fail to relieve all

his difficulties) that the Wise Man asserts that this silence is a chief mark of piety :—

- 28 Even a fool is counted wise if he hold his peace ;
a man of discernment, if he shut his lips.

28 Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise ; and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.

It is so, secularly. Such Proverbs are in all nations. It is so, religiously ; and so thoroughly so, that if a man do shut his lips, he *is* “wise.” If a man really defers to God, and really bows in silence to the Almighty, he *does know knowledge* (v. 26) ; that is, *he has seen the light*, and seen enough of it in God to assure him in His holy Providence. The “fool” *is* a wise man, when he is silent, and when, in meek submission, he bows to what he cannot understand.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THESE divisions into chapters are comparatively recent ; and are of no imperative authority. They show the opinion of certain learned men as to divisions of subjects ; and we marked twelve statements in answer to 17:16, as terminating with the seventeenth chapter, and as finding, in the 27th and 28th verses, a fitting close to such a series of replications. But the scent, though colder, can be followed further. There is a marked separateness of idea in this chapter (18) at the expiration of the 9th verse. An interval indicates this, left by somebody longer ago than we have any history of the text. And yet the line of thought, more feebly, is traceable distinctly afterwards. That 16th verse of the last chapter is a very pregnant one. Solomon seems to linger upon it ; and it will be through some period of the book, before the trace of it so disappears, as to seem no longer present in the mind of inspiration. We are to learn in the first verse, that the cavils of the lost are not worthy of being respected, because they are not aiming after anything “stable,” but only following present impulse :—

1 The aims of a man left to himself are at | THROUGH desire a
the mere dictate of desire; himself, seeketh and
against everything stable he lets himself intermeddleth with all
roll along. wisdom.

“**A man left to himself.**” This is the Niphal participle of the verb *to separate away*, which occurs 16:28 and 17:9. It is there translated, “*drives away*” (e. g., “*a friend*”). It is there speaking of the isolation which the lost man makes for himself in the universe. The *separated one* (Niphal) here, therefore, is the impenitent. “**The aims of a man left to himself**” is really a translation of but two words, and means, literally,—*a separated one seeks*. “**At the mere dictate of desire**” is but one noun with a preceding ה, a ה meaning *after*, or *according to*. The noun is from a root meaning to *incline*, to *have a bent*, which grew to mean, to *long*. The noun, therefore, means a *longing*. The sentence means, that when a man gets separated from his place in the universe, he *seeks*, or *has a pursuit*, simply after his present *bent*, or *longing*. And then, as the second clause: “**Against everything stable he lets himself roll along.**” “**Everything stable.**” This is the common substantive, *all*, with the word thoroughly discussed under a previous passage (2:7). This word, (E. V.), is there translated “*sound wisdom*,” and here, “*wisdom*.” It is derived from the verb נִשְׁׁבַּע. It means that which will *be* or *stand* with some stability; yielding the sense,—the lost man sits careless to what is “*stable*.” He does not regard it. He strikes for what he desires. A pretty thing for him to cavil! since “*against everything stable he just lets himself roll.*” This last verb is the one in v. 14 of the last chapter, where we are commanded to break off “*contention before it pours forth*” (or *bears itself along*). In the first clause the word “*at*,” or *according to*, would seem superfluous to the lexicographers; who quote this verse and others as showing that the verb *to seek* takes sometimes ה. The clause would then mean,—*A separated one seeks his own craving*, which would be very intelligible. But a search into the passages seems to reveal that the ה has a separate force, and means, rather, that the lost man’s pursuits are *according to his cravings*,

just as God's *seeking* or *inquisition* (Ps. 10:15) is *according to sin*. The whole meaning, therefore, is, that the lost man is in high chase, under the spur of appetite, and ruthlessly bears down "*everything stable*."

The next verse intimates that his "*desire*" is not wisdom:—

- 2 The stupid has no delight in discernment,
but in his heart's acting itself out. 2 A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.

Why should a sinner set himself up as a judge of right, when he "**has no delight**" in the thing he judges of? "**Acting itself out.**" One can hardly help imagining that this Hithpahel has the same force as that in the last verse. They are both rare Hithpahels, and very similar. The sense would then be,— "**The stupid has no delight in discernment, but in his heart's "having its full sweep** (i. e., *rolling itself along*). That would be a very good meaning. Still, there is no mistaking the superior claim of another verb that means to *make naked*. Hence, in the Hithpahel, to *make oneself naked*. It really includes more than *bearing oneself along*, it may be; viz., as in the instance of the text, delighting, not only in *laying the heart bare*, or *acting it out nakedly* (as the sinner undoubtedly does), but having it conceitedly *show itself*. For the wise love wisdom on its own account, and, therefore, are best fitted to judge about it. "*The stupid*," like one of the mothers before Solomon, is no kin to the child, and only desires it, to parade a false possession.

Next comes the charge, that cavilling is natural to a condition of impenitence; and, therefore, the born caviller is not fit to judge of the Most High:—

- 3 When the wicked enters, there enters also
contemptuousness;
and with disgrace, reproachfulness. 3 When the wicked cometh, then cometh also contempt, and with ignominy reproach.

"**Contemptuousness**" and "**reproachfulness**" do not stand here, as the commentators would translate, for *being contemned*, or *being reproached*, meaning, that a "**wicked**" man will be *contemned*, and a *disgraced* man *reproached*, which would be the most vapid of all truisms: but that, when a "**wicked**" man "**en-**

ters" or comes upon the stage, that creature, the most degraded of the universe, and who has the least right to show any *contempt*, is the very person to be the most *contemptuous*; and the mortal who is himself most *disgraced*, shows the readiest mind to cry shame upon and to *reproach*, and that even the Most High. Doubtless there is secular truth in all this. The *disgraced* citizen is often the most *reproachful*. But Solomon adds it as another great timber in his structure of defence; that our lost heart is the wrong thing to lean to in its upbraiding of Jehovah; seeing that the more Wisdom takes her flight, the more, by experience, we are found to *contemn* and upbraid her.

Men's utterances are "deep;" why should not also be the Almighty's?—

- 4 Deep waters are the words of a man's mouth;
a gushing stream is the fountain of wisdom.
⁴ The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the well-spring of wisdom as a flowing brook.

Talleyrand defined speech to be the art of concealing one's opinions. Speech, even without any attempt at concealment, must be endlessly deep and wide as uttering all our being. Who can translate all its outgoings? If this be so with man, who shall judge of God, and censure His obscurer revelations? Solomon is satisfied with one great difference,—that while man's speech is "deep," God's speech is both "deep" and living. One has a vital source. The other is dead and stagnant. Grant that both are obscure. One is the darkness of a pool, the other the breadth and gush of an overflowing water. We ought to submit to mystery in God, for the tide of His utterance is to flow forever.

God cannot be *partial* to the "wicked." If He is strict against "the righteous," can He be less so against the lost? If He rule His saints by law, and make them accept a substitute, can He ruin His kingdom of righteousness by forsaking all "judgment" with the wicked? Therefore:—

- 5 Partiality to a wicked man is not good,
to the turning aside of the righteous in judgment.
⁵ It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment.

"**Partiality**;" literally, *a lifting of the countenance*. I lift a man's countenance, when I cheer him up. I lift a child's countenance, when I look at him merrily, or look pleased again after wrath. Very rarely in the Bible it is applied, as *ex origine*, to that cheering of a man up, or recovering of him after being dejected; but, usually, it is translated, to "*respect the person*" (E. V.; Lev. 19:15); for it got the meaning of *cheering*, or *brightening a face* for personal or *partial* reasons. "**Partiality**," therefore, is a very good general meaning. "**To the turning aside.**" This is merely *by* with an infinitive. It means, *with the result of "turning aside."* "**The righteous.**" This is the mere adjective. It may refer to God, or anybody. It does refer to any "**righteous**" interest. It is not right to sacrifice *righteousness* to wickedness; or to be *partial* to the lost, at the expense of justice. "**Turning aside.**" This has usually another noun after it, as, for example, the *turning aside* (of) *the widow from her right*. Here, that other is understood, and "*turning aside*" grew to stand alone (Is. 29:21) as meaning to defraud, or injure. Such, therefore, is another great principle. If God is thought to be vengeful and malign, what is He to do? Is He to sacrifice the justice of the good in partiality to the impenitent and wicked?

Four reasons are next given which should turn "**a stupid man**," away from the "**quarrel**," and stamp him unfit to question the Deity; first, that he is "**a stupid man**," and none but stupid men ever get into quarrels, and that, without much difference whether it be on one side or the other; second, that his "**quarrel**" has injured him already, and proved its folly by its mischievous effects; third, that he loves the "**quarrel**" (a most suspicious circumstance); that instead of grieving over hard "**words**," when uttered against the Maker, he likes them; they "**are dainty morsels, and go down to the very chambers of the belly;**" and fourthly, that he is not a creature holding off out of helpless incapacity of "**heart**" (which is the great cavil), and waiting on neutral ground till God shall do him justice; far from it! he has taken a determined side; complaining that God does not choose him, he has chosen for himself; and, instead of waiting for God to work, he has acted voluntarily, *making himself*

lax, as the inspired man expresses it, by which is meant **discouraging himself** from the faith; making himself more a rebel than he thinks, and by these very cavils "**the brother of him who is a**" *positive destroyer*. Let us throw the four together:—

- 6 The lips of a stupid man come into a quarrel;
and it is his mouth that gives a name to blows.
- 7 The mouth of a stupid man is ruin to himself;
and his lips are a snare to his soul.
- 8 The words of a talker are as dainty morsels,
and, as such, go down to the very chambers of the belly.
- 9 Even he who discourages himself in his duty,
is the very brother of him who is a master of destruction.

6 A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.

7 A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.

8 The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

9 He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.

"**The lips of a stupid man come into a quarrel.**" This is true, secularly. Either one or both of the parties in a "*quarrel*" are *stupid men*. They would not quarrel if they were smart. But in the "*quarrel*" with God, how eminent the truth stated! One cause of the "*quarrel*" is, that an ungodly fool undertakes to judge of his punishment. "**It is his mouth that gives a name to blows.**" "*Gives a name to*;" literally, *calls to*; "*He called to the light, Day!*" (and so named it day, Gen. 1:5). Our English Version has it, "*his mouth calleth for strokes.*" The other usage is so common, and the sense given by it so striking, that we cannot even pause in its choice. Why should we? when it is far the more idiomatic, and far the more expressive line of interpretation? V. 7. "**The mouth of a stupid man is ruin to himself.**" That bodes ill. Can his plea be just, if he hardens as he makes it? Nothing depraves a man faster than hard thoughts of Jehovah. And Solomon would use the lesson in both directions; first, the folly of the debate if it does us mischief; and, second, the suspiciousness of what we say, if saying it corrupts, and tangles the utterer in "**a snare to his soul.**" V. 8. If they are honest, our difficulties should give us

pain. The Wise Man reminds us that they give us pleasure. A great earnest nature would be sad at cavilling with God. Solomon charges that it becomes a “*dainty*.” The “*talker*” and the listener like it. He adds this to the suspicious circumstance. “*Dainty*” with the speaker, they “*go down*” with the hearer, and, in the quaint old Hebrew, “*to the very chambers of the belly*.” V. 9. Nor let the soul deceive itself with the idea that it is merely passive. Many think that they only wait for God, and that they are to be encouraged and apologized for by their actual discouragement. Isaiah throws this into language. They are eager that He should save ! “ Let him make speed and hasten his work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it ” (Is. 5 : 19). But the sentiment of the Proverb is, that the soul has no middle ground where it can wait for a blessing. “ He that is not with me is against me ” (Matt. 12 : 30). The “*fearful*,” as well as the “*abominable*, are to have their part, etc.” (Rev. 21 : 8). The principle of cavilling shows activity, and denotes a distinct advance in positive corruption (Rom. 2 : 8). And, therefore, however *relaxed*, as the expression means, (it is a Hithpahel, and means *loosening*, or *discouraging oneself*), this *relaxing* is so self-willed as to make a man “*brother*,” as the Proverb propounds it, to him whom he would regard as “**a master of destruction**.” “**Duty**;” literally, *message*; often, *service*; English Version, “*work*.” It is literally *the message*, as of a great prince; and may best, therefore, be translated as “*duty*.” “*Master of destruction*,” like “*master*” in several other Proverbs (1 : 19); denoting a man who *has* a thing or *wields* it; not a master in the sense of being a *proficient*, but in the more idiomatic sense of *having* the thing or *doing* the work that the term may indicate; the meaning being, that the mere “*worthless man*” (see those pictures already given, 6 : 12; 16 : 27-30), or the mere *discouraged* unbeliever, though he may be really *thoughtful*, is so positively a man of sin in his holding off, that he is to be impugned as *rebellious* (17 : 11), and is “*brother of him*” who is an *absolute destroyer*.

Here, very anciently, an interval is fixed; whether by Solomon or those later, it is, of course, impossible to determine. It oc-

curs in the most ancient manuscripts, and indicates in the eye of him who fixed it, some change of thought. Nevertheless, there is still a lingering of the old scent upon the track of inspiration :—

- 10 The name of Jehovah is a tower of strength; | to The name of the
the righteous runs into it, and is listed high. LORD is a strong tower;
into it, and is safe.

“**The name;**” that is, in this figurative sense, the *character as it may be seen revealed* (Mal. 3:16); not the mere title, but something deeper; not the entire character, but something less deep; the character, as it may be known, and, therefore, as it is used as a “name,” and may be handled by the people. “*The name of Jehovah*” is *His revealed character*. This, we have seen, is soiled by the lost man, because it is cavilled at by doubt and crimination. “**The righteous,**” the Wise Man declares, makes it “**a tower of strength.**” This is true, first, more superficially. To “*the righteous*” God is good, and he nestles and shelters himself in that; “*runs in*” to the nurture of God’s love, and, in the comfort of this “*strong tower*,” “*is lifted high.*” But, second, there is a profounder sense. The very “*name*” that is cavilled at by the lost, is the foundation of the Christian’s safety. “What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh,” God did by His “*name*.” He gave it to Christ’s humanity. More specifically speaking, He used it in “*name*” of His own sacrifice, to balance our guilt, and to give weight and value to the price of His redemption. We are repeatedly said to be saved by the “*name*” of God (Ps. 54:1; John 17:11, 12). And this is the meaning. The sacred Majesty of God, which the lost man would upbraid, is what is vital in the cross of Christ. It is only “*a strong tower*,” but our only defence. And the act of faith is a renouncing of self, and a snatching at “*the name*,” that is, the rights and substituted offering of our Great Deliverer.

Unbelief seeks worldly refuges:—

- 11 The competency of a rich man is the city | 11 The rich man's
of his strength; wealth is his strong
and as a high wall in his imagination. city, and as an high
wall in his own con-
ceit.

"Competency." This word is usually translated "*wealth*" (E. V.); and not incorrectly so. But, as its original root is a verb meaning to be *light*, *easy* (see Hiphil, Deut. 1:41, "Ye acted lightly to go up"); and as this *easiness* (Our Saviour calls it "trust," Mar. 10:24.) is the snare intended to be complained of, it is exceedingly well to retain the primary idea. "**The city of his strength.**" Better, in the opinion of the impenitent, than "*a tower of strength*" (v. 10), because he can live in it, and do well. "**A high wall;**" i. e., to fence him off from distress. This refuge is denounced by Habakkuk (Hab. 2:9), "Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high." "**Imagination;**" literally, *image*, or, collectively, *imagery* (Ez. 8:12, "chambers of imagery.") "**In his imagination,**" is, therefore, "*in his image*," or (**בּ** *essentiæ*) "*as his image*." Wealth, therefore, as "*a high wall*" to the "*rich*," is only a *phantasm*, or "*image*." So is spiritual "*competency*," where he derives it in any way as of himself.

Nay, it is a peril:—

12 Before ruin the heart of man is lofty; and before honor is humiliation.

|
12 Before destruction
the heart of man is
haughty; and before
honour is humility.

Not "*a high wall*," therefore (v. 11), but a special exposure. "**Humiliation.**" "*Humility*" is not a good translation (E. V.), for it leaves out the affliction that produced it. "*Affliction*" is not a good translation, for it leaves out the humility in which it must result. The root of the word means to *labor*; hence to be *afflicted*; hence to be *humbled*. The best translation is one that unites the afflictive and the virtuous as "*humiliation*" does, it being the desired result. The clause is often illustrated on earth, but always, in the "*honor*" or glory that is on high.

Such being the "*name*" of God and the danger of any other dependence, the lost man ought to be very sure before he attempts to assail it:—

13 He that answers a thing before he listens; it is folly itself to him, and also shame.

|
13 He that answer-
eth a matter before he
heareth it, it is folly
and shame unto him.

Secularly, this is beyond a doubt. Judicially, here is a great outrage; socially, a something very impolite; but religiously, a thing altogether a "**shame.**" Men born yesterday might certainly afford to *listen*. Life is a wide thing; and might, at least, be acted through, before, in the darker points, we insist upon a judgment. "**Folly itself.**" This emphasis is put by a pronoun. These pronouns are usually implied; when expressed, they are always emphatic. "*Folly*;" and, therefore, mischief; "*shame*;" and, therefore, ill desert. These elements often appear together.

- 14 The spirit of a man may control his sick-
ness;
but a spirit of upbraiding—who can carry
that?

¹⁴ The spirit of a
man will sustain his in-
firmity; but a wound-
ed spirit who can bear?

To give all up, and simply lie back and murmur, is bad even for worldly disorders; but Solomon derives out of it a much more profound spiritual sense. "**The spirit of a man**," at least among those to whom Solomon wrote, had truth enough to save him, if he would only *listen*. "**Control.**" The original is "*contain*," as wine in a bottle. "**Sickness;**" literally, what is physical; but, in this same book employed for the spiritual malady (23:35). If the soul, therefore, would lie quiet, and yield to its own light, it would be joined by what was higher, and would *contain* or "*control*" its own malady; God helping, as He would, would check, and get the better of it; "**but a spirit of upbraiding;**" and by this is meant precisely the "*quarrel*" (17:19) with God which has been so long discussed, is what ruins all. It is upon them that are **CONTENTIOUS**, and will not obey the truth, Rom. 2:8 (that truth being in all of them through "the invisible things," which are seen "by the things that are made," Rom. 1:20) that the apostle denounces "tribulation and wrath, indignation and anguish." Not that men can save themselves, but that they would save themselves under God's influences if they did not contend with Him; that it is "*rebellion*" that turns the scale (Ps. 68:6); that there is light enough in every man to draw him to saving light if he would only follow it; that this ceasing to contend is itself the decisive

gift; and that on this very account it is the great sorrow of the sinner that he has this “*spirit of upbraiding*,” which, in the spiritual world, no mortal malady “*can carry*.” “*Wounded spirit*” (E. V.). We have discussed this previously (15:13; 17:22). There are really two verbs,—to *strike*, and to *upbraid*. One is **הַבֵּן**, the other **הַנְּפָלֵךְ**. It is seen that they are very different.

One can throw its mantle over this case only by interpolating a letter. The other covers it without, and in a regular way. Both would be necessarily Niphals (passives); the one meaning *struck*, or *wounded*, ours meaning *upbraided*, or (read causatively, as Niphals sometimes are), *made reproachful*, i. e., *made to upbraid*. We have examined all the instances. Some seem better with one word, and some with the other; and so the lexicons (strangely enough) divide them. All *read*, however, with our word; and all *do not* with the other. Ours, not requiring the interpolation of a letter, and carrying a sense vital in some of the cases, we ought to choose it for all. The English Version has serious difficulties. That “*the spirit of a man*” will “*sustain*” him, but “*a wounded spirit*” cannot be sustained, is striking, secularly; but what then in religion? We nurse the tenet that there is no Proverb not religious: nay, none not where it is, solely that it may have a meaning in the gospel.

And now another appeal! Can the sinner lay his hand upon his heart and say, that he *cares* for wisdom in such a sense as that he is really *seeking* it? What right has he to judge of “*knowledge*” if he does not care for it? And how wise to dote on “*knowledge*,” and all the more eagerly to draw to it, if he seriously has his difficulties, and really wrestles with them, and cares for them with a bewildering agitation:—

15 A heart made discerning gains in knowl-
edge;
and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.

15 The heart of the
prudent getteth knowl-
edge; and the ear of
the wise seeketh knowl-
edge.

This is a beautiful fact. Wisdom gathers wisdom. Snow gathers snow, as we roll it on the ground. A wood gathers wood, like all vegetable or vital growths. A sinner stands dead like a blasted oak; but a saint, not only lives by growing, but

grows by living. Let the caviller really push into the thing, and try to get it, and try what he will think of it when actually gotten, before he contemns the “*knowledge*” and justice of the skies.

Let him try this, not only for its effect upon himself, but upon God :—

- 16 The gift of a plain man makes room for 16 A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.
him,
and brings him before the great.

This was understood in those Eastern countries. “**A plain man**,” literally, “*a man*” (אָנָּס); but *man*, in that humbler name, which is often intentionally distinctive (Is. 2:9). A peasant with a fine diamond, could work his way among the proudest kings. Did the sinner ever try the like in his caviling difficulties? “Why is this?” he asks (17:16), “a price in the hand to get wisdom, and no heart?” Well! did he ever use a present? Did he ever bribe God? I mean, *give* Him something? Did he ever offer Him this very “*heart*” which needs to be added to, and better “*heart*” given? Has he brought it just as it is? for, the worse he thinks it is, the better for a “*gift*;” for lo! “the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Ps. 51:17). If the sinner (one of creation’s peasants) really wishes to know God, and to get out of a clouded government, and to have **room made for him that he may be brought before The Great**, let him try that High Dignitary with a “*gift*;” only seeing that it be sincere and honest, and such a sacrifice as a king might value.

For, after all, what is the use of quarrelling with God? It is only our side of the case; and one flash of the Judgment will overwhelm us with the other :—

- 17 He who is righteous as first in his own quarrel shall have his neighbor come and search him. 17 He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.

One clause is literal. The first stands much shorter in the

Hebrew. It reads thus:—"A righteous one, the first in his quarrel ;" and has a brevity which (Anglice) is practically too great. The "righteous" is not a *righteous man pro vero*, but only *righteous he having the first chance to speak*. How true this is, men for the first time in a court, can easily imagine. Each last strong speech comes out victorious. Now the lost has done all the strong speaking as yet. Wait till God speaks, and the case will look very differently.

There is another principle. Solomon appeals to the consideration of the *status quo*. When men differ, they often choose some brute decision, and anything being too hard to see through, they settle it by arbitrament of chance:—

- 18 The lot quiets contentions,
and parts the mighty.

| 18 The lot causeth
contentions to cease,
and parteth between
the mighty.

A fortiori, the sinner. He is not "**mighty**;" and, therefore, can better afford to submit. His "**lot**" is already cast, and he must take it as his established heritage. He does not think it all wrong, for he sees in it much right. Let him accept the *status quo*; and, as there is a free gospel, let him seize it as his lot, and wait for a more full solution till **his Neighbor searches him**.

For Solomon goes on to urge,—See how much we are losing by the quarrel:—

- 19 When a brother is revolted away, it is from
a city of strength;
and contentions are like the bar of a cita-

| 19 A brother offend-
ed is harder to be won
than a strong city; and
their contentions are
like the bars of a castle.

Here, as in the 17th verse, the second clause is literal; the first clause is necessarily lengthened out. The first clause in Hebrew is,—"**A brother revolted away from a city of strength.**" There are but four vocables; (1) "*A brother*" (merely the noun without the article); (2) "*revolted away*" (merely a participle—the Niphal (passive) participle from the verb *to revolt*; meaning "*revolted*," or *carried away by revolt*); (3) "*from a city*" (a noun with a preposition); and (4) "*of strength*," (another noun, but with the force of an adjective, as though it read,

from a strong city); the whole meaning that one “*brother*” “*revolted away*” from another, is “*revolted from a city of strength*,” that being what one is to all the rest. In other words, brothers are a shelter to brothers, and quarrels lock up that resort; or, as the last clause expresses it, “**contentions are like the bar of a citadel.**” Notice that a brother is not only a commoner defence, but “*a citadel*;” and “*a bar*” to that keep shuts a man out of his best earthly dependence. It is a fine adage, even for this world, and a case hard to comprehend, that all commentators should have turned it into another meaning. But when applied to our Great Brother, and to our God and King, it is one of the noblest of inspired texts. He who offends our Brother Prince, shuts a High Tower (Ps. 18:2). He who quarrels with our Surety, snaps-to the lock of a “*Citadel*;” and then, alas! it shall be, just as the wild rush of embittered enemies should have roused him to enter in. “*Harder to be won*” (E. V.). This is all made-up language. The “*city*” and the “*castle*” (E. V.) with other commentators are only made to represent the inexpugnable nature of a quarrel; and all the idea of “*shelter*,” and fact of the “*strong city*” which one brother might be to the other; which wealth is fancied to be by its possessor (v. 11); which the name of God is (v. 10) (with the varied figure of “*a high tower*”), all commentators have entirely let go. “*Citadel* ;” derived from a root meaning *high*. A “*castle*” (E. V.) may be a *citadel* or not, as may happen. Some *castles* have a *citadel*. We choose the word “*citadel*,” because, among other reasons, the Hebrew was applied to what unquestionably *was* a “*citadel*,” I mean a very strong defence, that frowned upon the City of David (1 Ki. 16:18).

But a difficulty in the way of taking Solomon’s advice, is, that men will talk as they feel. Though “**death and life are in the hand of the tongue**,” yet “**just as they love it each man shall eat its fruit.**” It is very easy to depict one’s peril; but deeper than all our arguments lies this, that “**out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth will speak**” (Matt. 12:34):—

- 20** From the gains of a man's mouth his belly' is satisfied;
as it is the product of his own lips, he is satisfied himself.
21 Death and life are in the hand of the tongue;
and just as they love it each man shall eat its fruit.
- 20** A man's belly' shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth : and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled.
21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue : and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

There are two translations possible for each, taking both of these Proverbs together. By one the verbs to be "*satisfied from*" and to "*eat*" mean merely to "*be filled with*" (E. V.), and to actually *incur*. By the other, we have, to *be satisfied with*, or to *have a taste for*, meaning actually to *enjoy*. The former has very little force; the latter more grammar, great freshness of thought, and more advance upon each previous expression. V. 20. "**F**rom the gains of a man's mouth :" from what he earns by labor. The mouth in those countries was a foremost instrument for business. "**H**is belly is satisfied ;" that is, his common wants are supplied. "**A**s it is the product of his own lips ;" i. e., as it is his own pleasure, viz., what has received an impulse as his own free activity. "**H**e is satisfied ;" and to make it more emphatic, and to point the contrast, we make it, "**h**e is satisfied himself." That is, not only is his "*belly satisfied*," taking cognizance of his common wants, but "*he is satisfied*;" the idea being, that a man must be "*satisfied*" with what he utters; else, why did he utter it? nay, more, that there is an invincible congeniality of character between a man and all that he puts forth. I said there was more grammar in this :—Now, "*gains*" has the preposition before it, and directly means that, *with* which the belly is satisfied; but "*product*" has no preposition before it, as it would have if it were a mere parallel assertion. It stands absolutely. The force of the accusative justifies the prefix "*as*" (see E. V. John 1:14). The word "*satisfied*" rarely justifies the rendering "*with*" (E. V.) without a preposition; at least, where it does so, the primary idea is "*as to* ;" as, for example (Ex. 16:12), "*satisfied as to bread*." Our understanding of v. 20 is, that as the outward wants of a man are satisfied by his daily acts, so he himself is, and that simply

as his acts, or because of the intimate sympathy between the man and what he does. This thought is still clearer in the verse that follows:—V. 21. “*Death and life are in the hand of the tongue.*” There can be no doubt that men’s conduct (for “tongue” is but the leading instrument of it) determines “death” or “life;” yet, in spite of the adventurous hazard, *their love to it* (or, literally, “*just as they love*” this or that sort of “tongue,” i. e., action), they “*shall eat its fruit,*” and incur, of course, its fearful responsibilities. “The good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things; and the evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things.” “*Death (or) life*” are not able to decide a man against his “tongue;” for it lies near his will; and he must use it as he likes,—or *loves*. “*Hand;*” see discussion (3:18). “*Hand*” means (not “*power*,” E. V., but) *agency*: “*Death and life*” lie in the *agency of the tongue*. We retain “*hand*” as the Hebraistic idiom. Another sense, very striking, but which we postpone to what we have given, would make “*love*” to the tongue, mean care over it, or looking after it. The sense would then be, that, as the “*tongue*” instrumentally can give life, he who *loves* his “*tongue*,” that is, in the sense of looking after it, shall “*eat its fruit*.” This narrows the meaning of “*love*;” varies from the verse preceding; and clashes with the whole passage. We prefer the first. And before leaving it, let me call attention to the plural and the singular in the second clause (see 3:18). “According as *they* love it, *each man*.” It is out of this play of numbers that we derive our word “*each*.” It is not there, literally. One man prefers one tongue, and one another; but according as *they* prefer, *each one* shall “*eat its fruit*.”

Terribly swayed by passion, what, therefore, is better for a man than his most intimate friend?—

- 22 He that has found a wife, has found a good thing,
and shall draw forth favor from Jehovah.

22 Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.

Let me not repeat too often that there is a secular and a spiritual in every Proverb. These two are not apart, but flow

easily into each other. Secularly, “*a wife*,” is the highest treasure. It is a vapid thing to stop to say, *a good wife*; and the Bible many times hurries on without any such distinction (comp. 4:3). A bad “*wife*” is no “*wife*” at all. A wife is in the holiest of all relations; in this world the most powerful for good. The lost, needing “*heart*,” to go back to that old difficulty (17:16), the best instrument to drag him up from that state (15:24), and get it given to him, is a near friend (17:17; 18:24); and who is a near friend if not a *wife*? (31:11). “*Heart*” it seems God must bestow, and the problem it appears is, to get it *drawn out of Jehovah*. Who is better for this than a pious *wife*? The great object is to find one, for it would seem that she may be lost among the indifferent mass. A good marriage is a means of grace; for, “*he that has found a wife, has found a good thing, and shall draw forth favor from Jehovah*.” Of course any relation that is near and potent is covered by the passage. The “*wife*,” like the “*father*” of other Proverbs, is the head sample of a class.

Once more, as to cavils; is it not better for a sinner, “**poor man**” as he is, to talk a little more modestly about One so high above him:—

- 23** The poor man speaks in supplications; | ²³ The poor useth
but the rich man utters back strong things. | entreaties: but the
rich answereth roughly.

The angels smile at the way the sinner cavils. He reverses what the Proverb pronounces natural. For He who is Supremely “**Rich**,” is meek and tender; and he who is profoundly poor, is loud in his reproach!

Now, one lesson more. Men should be more modest as against the friendship of God; when they have such sad experience of the friendship of each other:—

- 24** A man of friends is apt to be broken all to pieces; | ²⁴ A man that hath
but there is that loves cleaving closer than a brother. | friends must show himself friendly; and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

“**A man of friends;**” *a man of many acquaintances*. “**Is apt to be;**” an English, all (and very regularly) expressed by the

Hebrew בַּשׁ, because it is the בַּ of *result*, as before an infinitive. “**Broken all to pieces:**” or the Hithpohal of the verb meaning to break in pieces: the significance of the whole being, that a man of wide acquaintance is apt to break. Human friendships cost. In the strife to appear well; in the time it takes; in the industries they scatter; in the hospitalities they provoke, and in the securityships they engender, broadening our socialities will try every one of us well. It is not so with Heavenly friendships. All spiritual communisms bless. And there is a Friend who LOVES, in the genuine nature of that act, with a love “cleaving closer than a brother;” who loves when other friends fail; and, though there is a secular use referring to solid human friendships, yet they are but the shadow of the divine. All disappoint: save that one “closer” love that cleaves to us when “a brother” fails us. There is a different sense (see Zöckler *in loco*); and very striking; though not,—“Should show himself friendly” as of our English Version. Our English Version too patently mistakes the root. It is יָעַר and not יָעַר. The sense referred to, is one that takes the verb in its other meaning, namely, to do ill, or to turn out badly. “A man of friends” would then mean a man profuse in his friendships. It would mean,—he must turn out badly. Jehovah, who is the object of our cavil, is careful when He makes His proffers. Hence the antithesis of the Proverb. God does not scatter love: and all the more on this very account should you trust Him, because where He does love He cleaves fast, while “a man of (many) friends,” that is, profuse in friendliness, is hollow, and “shall turn out badly.” This is a fine truth, and would suit the sentence if it were going a-begging for a sense. But the other rendering has the more original claim; suits better the passive character of the form; translates better the antecedent part; and agrees with the only other case where this Hithpohal is used, viz., Is. 24:19: where our English Version (adding “utterly” for a prefixed infinitive, see passage) seems to render it aright, “The earth is utterly broken down.” “Closer than,” derives its idea from the verb to cleave. It is expressed as a usual comparative, simply by the prep. *בְּ* than בַּ.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE next Proverb teaches the lesson that “a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15);—

- 1 Better is a poor man walking in his integrity,
than he that is crooked in his speech, and BETTER is the poor
that walketh in his in-
tegrity, than he that is
perverse in his lips, and
is a fool.
as such a fool.

This idea is repeated in other verses of the chapter. “The pleasure of the commonest sort of man is his kindness; and better off is a poor man than a false man of the better sort” (v. 22). “The fear of Jehovah serves as a life; and he that is satisfied with it, has a dwelling. He shall not be visited as an evil” (v. 23). What we are to understand by it is, that “integrity,” or “kindness,” or “the fear of Jehovah” (by whichever of the names we choose to call it) is itself a life, and a whole enjoyment, and better, therefore, than worldly interests which are nothing of the kind. “Walking.” This is an Eastern figure, and we have failed to substitute it by a Western one. *A way* in the East means a man's total course. “Walking,” therefore, means his total life or being. “Enoch walked with God” (Gen. 5:22), when he lived with Him in all his conduct. “Better is a poor man walking in his integrity,” refers, therefore, to a man not living in his money, nor, indeed, in his horses or in his hounds, not *living in* his integrity (and we, therefore, rejected that English), but “walking” in it, i. e., spending his whole time in it, staying in that way; of course, taking his pleasure in it (see v. 22). “Than he that is crooked in his speech;” literally, *as to his lips*. We have seen that “speech” means *whole conduct*. The mouth, in those days, was the great implement of action. It is so still. The commonest laborer bargains out and orders out half of his living by his mouth. “Crooked in speech,” means speaking (i. e., acting) athwart of what we ourselves know in many particulars; first,

athwart all moral truth; second, athwart deep personal conviction; third, athwart all personal interest (as our text implies). A Christian talks straight, because he speaks (acts) coincidently with all of these. A sinner is crooked of lip, because he says what he does not think, and traverses for his lusts all the best principles of his more conscientious nature. “**And as such.**” This is the emphatic pronoun. It should always be translated; most generally as “*himself*.²” The meaning then would be that wealth was but a poor equivalent for being “*a fool*;” because wealth was outside of a man’s being, but the “*fool*” was *himself*. But a reproduction of this text, slightly altered, occurs chap. 28 : 6. In that verse, “*ways*” takes the place of “*lips*,” and “*rich*” takes the place of “*a fool*.³” Otherwise the verses are identical. It would not do to translate “*in himself rich*,” for that is just the opposite of being the fact. We have selected, therefore, “*as such*” as answering perfectly to both. “*Better is the poor having his whole walk in his integrity, than he that is crooked in his speech, and as such a fool.*” A man may be a Christian, and still be found “*crooked in his speech*.⁴” Therefore the expression is quite significant, that the crookedness must reach his inmost character, and he must walk in it, and must walk in nothing else. It must mark him. On the other hand (28 : 6), a man may be “*crooked in his ways*,” and yet, for all, again, may be a poor penitent, and may be “*rich*” in gospel fashion. The “*as such*” cuts off all possibility here. The poor man is better than the rich man when the rich man has not the “*wealth that endureth*;” when his wealth lies outside: when inwardly he is utterly poor; when, to state it as in the 28th, he is “*crooked in his ways, and as such a rich man.*” “*Integrity* ;” from a root meaning *whole*.

The very title “*fool*” (v. 1), suggests an objection. If I am a fool, how can I help it? The next Proverb boldly assails this difficulty:—

- 2** Even because it has no knowledge life is | ² Also, *that* the soul
no good; be without knowledge,
but he that is hasty of foot is he that misses. | *it is not good; and he*
that hasteth with his
feet sinneth.

“**Even**” is a word too important to be changed or lost; and,

therefore, “*also*” (E. V.) spoils everything. The innocentest of all faults might seem ignorance. “*Even*” this, the inspired Proverb says, takes away all “*good*” from “*life*.” The only sin (when philosophically stated) is ignorance. The “chains” that confine the lost (2 Pe. 2:4) are “darkness.” The change that overtakes the saved is light (2 Cor. 4:6). The graces that adorn the Christian, all flow from a new intelligence. Our text is literally exact. If the man “*has no knowledge*,” and that of a deep spiritual sort, his “*life is no good*;” that is, it possesses none, and is itself a horrid evil. And yet the concluding clause very largely relieves the difficulty. The man, knowing there was something wrong, ought to pause, and grope about for the light, just as all would in a dark cavern. Instead of that, he rushes darkly on. Here, the inspired finger is put upon the precise mistake. We are warned that we are in blindness. Why not hesitate, then, and cast about us? We push on, when we know that we are in the dark. This is the photograph of the impenitent. He knows he lacks light; and yet, instead of seeking it; or else, at least, of stopping, he dashes on; robbing himself of all possible excuse; for, though “*because it has no knowledge, life is no good, yet he that is hasty of foot is the one that misses.*” “*Misses.*” It is a common word for “*sins*” (E. V.). But its original sense is, “*misses*.” It is as well to keep the original for its own sake. Our Bible sometimes does (Judges 20:16). Often it is much the more expressive (8:36; Is. 5:24). Always it is at the root of the sense, even when it is translated “*sins*.” And here it is indispensable. When a man “*has no knowledge*,” and, therefore, “*no good*,” in his “*life*” (literally, in his “*breath*;” usually, *soul*; sometimes, *appetite*); and when he does not stop to remedy the difficulty, but when he pushes on with that light which is in him, which is darkness (Matt. 6:23), he becomes doubly chargeable with his guilt, and misses pardon as a wilful consequence.

And yet, the Wise Man says, he ignores this point of wilfulness, and in his heart is angry with the Almighty:—

3 The folly of a man subverts his way; and then his heart is angry with Jehovah. | ³ The foolishness of man perverteth his way; and his heart fretteth against the LORD.

“**Subverts** ;” that is, totally *upsets* and ruins, so that it is no “**way** ” at all. Nothing could describe more truly the sinner’s path, because it does not reach even the ends that he himself relied upon. Death arrives, too, to wreck it totally. And though he has resisted the most winning arts to draw him unto Christ, yet, at each sad defeat, “**his heart is angry with Jehovah.** ”

4 A competence adds many friends; but the poor is separated even from the friend he has. | ⁴ Wealth maketh many friends: but the poor is separated from his neighbour.

Here, first, is a secular Proverb, with its obvious and notorious reality. Second follows the moral use to warn men, and, most of all, Christians, against such selfishness, and against wrong direction of their common friendships. But, third, (as in chap. 14 : 20), a great evangelic thought ! Our Redeemer teaches it (Matt. 13 : 12). “He that hath to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have.” A certain form of poverty will **separate** us even from God. “**Competence** ” (see 22 : 7); literally, “*ease* ;” that state of purse that makes men *easy* in their circumstances. There is the usual intenseness. Wealth “**adds friends.** ” Poverty takes the friends we have. It will be so in the eternal world.

The hardship of a curse for poverty (v. 4), like the hardship of a curse for ignorance (v. 2), is met by some of the same ideas (6 : 14). The universe cannot tolerate a discord (v. 19). One great object of the universe is to illustrate truth (Ec. 3 : 14). “The judgments of God are according to truth” (Rom. 2 : 2), and must necessarily be death to error. All men are *witnesses* (Is. 44 : 8). If they have witness of the truth well and good; they are in consistence with the universe. If they have witness of falsehood, it must go badly; for there is no use for falsehood, except punitively, in the whole creation :—

- 5 A deceived witness shall not go unpunished; and he whose breath is lies shall not escape.
 5 A false witness shall not be unpunished; and he that speaketh lies shall not escape.

The 9th verse repeats this text with the exception of the last word, which is "*perish*" (E. V.), or, more literally, "*be lost*." "**A deceived witness;**" literally, "*a witness of falsehoods*." We make the change to avoid an equivoque. "**Cannot go unpunished;**" literally, "*shall not be held innocent*." As the forms are more pregnant in Hebrew, we can read "*cannot*," and thereby have expressed the intrinsic impossibility. "**Breath;**" meaning the inborn and natural impulse. By all means let the sinner get rich (v. 7), for the poor man he is, and the "*deceived witness*" he is (v. 5) in his present state, creation itself will not be able to endure.

One way of gaining favor is by "**generous**" personal sacrifices:—

- 6 Many court a generous man; and every one is the friend of a man of gifts.
 6 Many will entreat the favour of the prince; and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts.

Again (v. 4), there are three gradations of the Proverb:—First, a secular one. It had its broad meaning in the world, where possibly Solomon found it. Second, a moral one. It reflects upon a course not creditable, and not to be followed by those of true principles of life. But, third, a gospel one; and this was Solomon's aim. Such was its true connection. Here it agrees with other passages (v. 4; 14: 20). For conduct not creditable to man, like that of the Unjust Judge (Luke 16: 8), is made to illustrate the conduct of the Almighty. If men despair of their safety, and complain of the results of their ignorance (v. 2) and poverty (vs. 5, 7), let them try to get up some *gift*; let them essay to approach God with bribes; let them try being a little "*generous*" to Him; giving Him a little of their time; offering to Him; bestowing on Him almost any gift, which men in the world around them might not value. It will work like a charm with Him. And why should we hesitate to try it with God? since, as our Proverb says, it works so notoriously well with men. "**Court;**" literally, "*stroke the face*

of." "A generous man;" usually, a "*prince*" (E. V.), or *noble*. But *willing, liberal*, is the literal sense; and has the right to come in when it suits. "**Man of gifts;**" "*man of a gift*," literally. We make such sacrifices, harmlessly, to English idiom.

Pleading poverty, as men are apt to do, when urged to be generous, the Proverb rolls back (v. 4) to the idea that men must look out about this matter of poverty in their relations with the Most High. Poverty will stand up as crime at the day of judgment. Christ (Luke 19 : 20) states the plea as actually made, and utterly demolished. "I feared thee because thou art an austere man, etc." (Luke 19 : 21).—

7 All the brothers of a poor man hate him, |⁷ All the brethren
for the same reason that his neighbors also |^{of the poor do hate}
keep at a distance from him. |^{him; how much more}
As one snatching at words they come to |^{do his friends go far}
stand towards him. |^{from him? he pursueth}
|^{them with words, yet}
|^{they are wanting to}
|^{him.}

The comment may be just the same as in vs. 4 and 6. There are three aspects of the verse:—first, the secular and notorious one; second, the moral of that, or admonitory one; and, thirdly, what might be called parabolic; that is, the gospel use of what stands precisely on the level of the pattern of the Unjust Judge. "**For the same reason that.**" We have stated our objections to "*how much more*" (E. V.) under other passages (11 : 31). The above is the literal significance. "**Towards him.**" The *textus receptus* alters this by a letter, so that it reads "*not.*" Thereby hangs a difference between one force of the passage and another, both accordant, but each quite distinct. They are as follows. If the Hebrew be (אֵל), "*not*," then the translation may be,—"*He follows words* (i. e., *promises* of these supposed friends), *and they are not*" (i. e., *they disappoint him*). If the Hebrew be (אֶל) "*towards him*," then the translation may be, *as one pursuing (or turning hostilely against) "words"* (i. e., seeking a pretext in mere "*words*," whereby they can throw him off) *are they towards him*. Evangelically, the Wise Man admits, for the moment, the charge of the sinner, that the Almighty seeks to throw him off, and does so by the hardest dealings against him. "I knew thee that thou art an austere

man, etc." He just accepts the charge, as God does on the day of judgment (Matt. 25 : 27), and pushes to the idea,—that, if "poor" men do so badly at the bar of God, they had better look out in time and get rich. "Thou oughtest, therefore, (i. e., for that very reason, if the chance was small) to have put my money to the exchangers." We must have some coin of the realm at the last day. The Proverb counsels us to be sure to get it. He tells us poor people do ill in this world. He assures us they will do worse in another. He advises us (*similia similibus*) to "make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness;" that, by all means, we may have some of that form of wealth, that will serve to introduce us into "everlasting habitations" (Lu. 16 : 9).

He tells them in the next verse what the passage-money into the other world must be:—

8 He that gains heart loves his own soul.
He that keeps watch over discernment
meets the result of finding good.

We have shown already (17:16) how important this understanding of the word "heart" is to the unravelling of many passages. It means *sanctified* mind or soul, in a great many instances. Men are said to *want* "heart" (i. e., to *want* sense, as we have sometimes translated it, out of deference to the English idiom). Their want was simply *pity* (9:4). Men are said to *get* "heart" (15:32); and to *increase* "heart," with corresponding intentions in the inspired Word. The coin of the realm, therefore, is "*heart*." We get "*heart*" by sanctification. We get sanctification as a free gift. We get it, instrumentally, by *watching over discernment*; that is, when we quit hastening *with our feet* (v. 2), and pray and ask that we *may discern* our duty. We are to call in every possible aid, and trust wholly to Almighty help. God offers to create us a new "*heart*;" and "*he that gains heart loves his own soul*; [and] *he that keeps watch over discernment, meets the result of finding good.*" "*Keeps watch over;*" that grand duty, to "*attend.*" "*Meets the result of.*" This English has nothing to underlie it, but the little particle *to*, meaning *to*, or *unto*, *for*, or *with* "*the*

result of." Let any one attempt to translate more briefly, and he will see how pregnant are the words of Hebrew.

The slothful servant, not heeding all this about the "ex-changers," and still keeping his pound rolled up in a napkin, the inspired Solomon recurs to the old idea:—There is really no place for him in a wise creation:—

- 9 A deceived witness shall not go unpunished; and he whose breath is lies shall be lost. 9. A false witness shall not be unpunished; and he that speaketh lies shall perish.

This is the fifth verse over again, with one exception. Instead of "*shall not escape*" (v. 5), it is, "*shall be lost*" (v. 9). The English version is, "*shall perish*." The root means to *lose oneself by wandering about*. The cognate Arabic means to *flee away wild in the desert*. Our text has the (Niphil) passive. The spirit, therefore, that habitually **breathes out** falsities, and, so, acts constitutionally athwart of what is true, is best described by keeping to the original; that is, instead of *perishing* in the broader and vaguer way, he *wanders off* and *is lost* in the wilderness of his own deceptions.

Would heaven really suit such a "**stupid**" one?—

- 10 Delight is not suited to a stupid man; for the same reason also that it is not to a servant to rule princes. 10. Delight is not seemly for a fool; much less for a servant to have rule over princes.

"**Is not suited to.**" The original root means to *sit*. We have the same idiomatic usage. A thing may *sit well* upon a person in any of many ways. It may *become him*. It may *agree with him* (physically). It may *please him*. There are, at least, these three senses. In chap. 17:7 ("Excellent speech does not suit the base") it partakes of the last sense; in the present text, of the first. The meaning is,—*Delight does not seem proper for a fool*; and it remains for the illustration of the Proverb to know the commoner or the more eminent sense in which its special language is intended to be taken. (1) In its secular form its truth is obvious. (2) In its higher but intermediate form, it means that an ungodly sinner, here called "**a stupid man**," on his way to death and judgment, is so shockingly off in all in-

terests of his being, that “*delight*” is a mockery; it is anything but suited to his state. And to have him stand, as he often does, superior to Christians, overawing Christian life, and repressing Christian eminence of character, is indeed a servant ruling a prince; and is as good an instance as could be met, of something that does not *suit*, or, as the original has it, does not *sit well*. (3) But Solomon would carry it a story higher. He means to continue his pursuit of the *impenitent*. He means to tell them that their “*delight*,” in itself considered, would not *sit well*; that to reward a fool would bring dishonor upon government; and to release the outlaw from his bonds, would really be to elect the slave to a post higher than the “*princes*.” “*Much less*” (E. V.); susceptible of the same comment as before (v. 7).

The *necessity* of punishment, however, does not preclude the truth that it is God’s “strange work” (Is. 28:21):—

ii The intelligence of the commonest man | ii The discretion of
gives slowness to his anger;
and it is his honor to pass over an offence. | a man deferreth his
anger; and it is his
glory to pass over a
transgression.

If men, as they grow more sensible, forgive easier, and “*it is (their) honor to pass over an offence*,” the implication is, that thus must it be with the All Wise. Complaint is foolish; for eternity will reveal that Jehovah took no pleasure in punishing us. “*The commonest man* ;” literally, “*a man*,” but *a man* under that title which all through this book (20:24), as in Isaiah 2:9, distinguishes itself from another title (see 30:2), which means *a man of the better sort*. This bearing of the word is very often noticeable, where we do not translate it (21:29). In this Proverb it gives two points of heightened emphasis:—First, even “*the commonest man*” thinks it well to forgive. How much more the Almighty! And, second, even “*the commonest man*,” when *intelligent*, forgives the easier: how much more the *Great “Intelligence!”* He who best understands His “*honor*,” would not be likely to inflict punishment unless where it was impossible that there should be a final “*escape*” (v. 5).

Therefore, when it does come, it must be by much the more

horrible. It is the "wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. 6:16). It is the remorseful visit of what we were warned to get freed of in time. It is "the wrath of a king;" and, therefore, all the more terrible as not for itself but for His government. "Behold the goodness and severity of God" (Rom. 11:22); severe, because of a necessity; but good, gently and of His own pleasure:—

- 12 The roaring as of a young lion is the wrath
of a king;
and as dew upon herbs is his favor.

12 The king's wrath
is as the roaring of a
lion: but his favour is
as dew upon the grass.

"**Young lion.**" The old are treacherous, and, on some accounts, more dangerous. They hang about springs and paths and weak camps, to snatch children and old men. They make up by stealthiness what they lack in speed; and in hunger, what they lack in power to wander and be fed. The "*young lion*," in the nobility of his powers, is the best emblem of God, Omnipotent when He does strike, and all the more terrible, when roused, for the generosity and splendors of His nature.

God would not wilfully have a disagreeable "**son**" (17:21, 25). He would not wantonly bring Himself into such close connection with the troublesome, as a husband is, with a turbulent and contentious woman:—

- 13 The ruin of his father is a stupid son;
and a continual dropping are a wife's con-

13 A foolish son is
the calamity of his
father; and a wife are a
continual dropping.

"**The ruin;**" literally, "*the ruins*." Commentators seem so much more than usually impressed with the plural here, as to translate it strongly, "*ruin upon ruin*." But the usual *pluralis excellentiae* is all that we need conceive. The Proverb is, of course, secular; so is the next. But the idea with Solomon seems to be,—The relation between God and the soul is of the very closest sort. A "**father**" and "**a son**"; nay, a husband and "**a wife**," are not so closely intertwined as God and the disagreeable offender. He would not willingly beget a depraved soul. He would not wilfully marry into a horrible house. It is true, He could correct the difficulty:—

14 House and competence are an inheritance
from fathers ;
and a thrifty wife is from Jehovah.

14 House and riches
are the inheritance of
fathers ; and a prudent
wife is from the Lord.

All that can make a son happy, and all that can correct the most unpleasant relations, are possibilities with God. And yet three states of fact must lie together in a form all of them to be believed :—First, God cannot want disagreeable and poor relations. Second, He could have agreeable and rich ones ; and, thirdly, He actually does have some of the meanest kind. All this seems taught by Solomon. Then what would he be understood as pressing on the part of the sinner ? God is a *father*. No *father* likes to have a bad son. God can make good sons. “**House and competence**,” i. e., every conceivable good, “**are an inheritance from**” this *Father*. He can hand them down at will. Nevertheless He does not hand them down. He has notoriously bad sons. He has spirits shut up with His Spirit in closer relation than a husband with a hateful “*wife*;” and they are abominable to Him, like the dripping of the rain. And yet the altering of such incongruousnesses is the high gift of God. The Wise Man does not say, these are no mysteries; but he fixes other great bearings for us. (1) God certainly is not wanton in our fate. (2) God certainly is not helpless to improve it. God, therefore, is the Being to whom to look. We should turn, therefore, industriously to the work of making friends with God ; and we should do it all the more earnestly and soon, because that is the part that He has set for us in His Holy Word. “**Thrifty** ;” from a verb meaning to be *wise*, and hence, by consequence, to be *prosperous*. “*Thrifty*” implies both. The text is usually read, as meaning, *that fathers can provide wealth, etc., but a wife is the gift of Heaven*. The theology is not good. Wealth is eminently from God. It rather means that a wife is house and wealth. That is to say, it arranges them as kindred gifts. As fathers provide house and ease for themselves and their children, so God, our Highest Father, provides our own and His own intimate relations.

Defending God as not wilfully a bad Father, Solomon comes back to man. Mysterious as may be God’s holding off from

man when He could help him if He would, man's holding off from God, instrumentally, has no mystery whatever. He can come to Him *if he will*. We hold the blessing in our own hands :—

- 15 Sloth causes a deep sleep to fall down ;
and an idle soul shall starve.

15 Slothfulness cast-
eth into a deep sleep ;
and an idle soul shall
suffer hunger.

The expression, “deep sleep,” is derived from a verb meaning to *snore*; and is the word used for the “sleep” of Adam, when the rib out of which Eve was made, was taken from his side. The Hiphil, “causes to fall,” is the same verb there employed. “Idle;” from a verb meaning to *let fall*, betokening the remiss condition of an utterly “idle” man. The inspired Proverb accounts for our not hearing the *roaring of the lion*, i. e., the *wrath of the Great King* (v. 12), by the effect of “sloth,” which is so “deep” in the spiritual world, as to cast into a torpid slumber. Nevertheless, notice ! It preserves the Hiphil form; “causes, etc.,” implying that “sloth” never loses its voluntariness. It “causes” wilfully the “sleep.” A man cannot change his heart; I mean cannot touch it with his finger, as a potter can the clay; but there are certain voluntary acts which either raise or ruin it. Without denying the influence of the Holy Spirit, the inspired man tells how observing the law, instrumentally decides our salvation :—

- 16 He that guards the commandment, guards
himself:
in scattering his ways he dies.

16 He that keepeth
the commandment
keepeth his own soul :
but he that despiseth
his ways shall die.

“Guards;” not “keeps” (E. V.); though “keeps” has crept, in our language, (doubtless through King James’ version), half into the sense of “guards” (see 4:23). *Keep* means to retain. *Guard* means to watch. The root of the present word means to *bristle*, then to *watch close*, either from the *bristling* of spears, or from a *sharp stare*. Undoubtedly it means to *watch*. And there is a philosophy in these favorite words בְּנֵי־בָּנָה and בְּנֵי־בָּנָה, which cover this ground in Scripture; viz., that conscience is vagrant. We have to *watch*. Like the mind it-

self, it is hard to hold it to the point. ATTENTION is our whole voluntary work. And, to a most amazing degree, the Scripture is framed upon this idea. We are to "remember now (*our*) Creator" (Ec. 12: 1). We are to "remember the Sabbath day" (Ex. 20: 8). We are to "observe to do, etc., " (this very word "guard") see Deut. 5: 1, 32, *et passim*. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed (this same word *guarding*) thereto according to thy word" (Ps. 119: 9). "**Guards himself:**" (the same word). This is an iron link of sequence, which no Anti-Calvinistic thought can shake. He who stands sentry over "**the commandment**," stands sentry over "**himself;**" literally, "*his soul*." There is no helplessness in man other than that "*tardema*," or "*deep sleep*" (v. 15), which "*loth*" wilfully casts him into; and which a voluntary slothfulness perpetually increases and maintains. "The fault is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are aliens." The Proverb advances upon this in the second clause. What more voluntary than a man's *way*? It has a voluntary goal. It has a daily journeying. And it includes all that *is* voluntary. Seize a man at any moment. All that he is upon, is part of his life's travel. Now a Christian has but one *way*. So far forth as he is a Christian, he has but one end, and one path for reaching it. There is a beautiful unitariness in his journeying. It is a habit of Scripture to turn attention to the **scattered** life of the lost. They have no one end. "If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light," says the Saviour (Matt. 6: 23). Thou "hast scattered thy ways to the strangers," says Jeremiah (3: 13); this same expression. "Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way" (Jer. 2: 36)? "*Despiseth*" (E. V.) suits the lexicon, and suits the sense; for certainly a lost man has less respect for his way and life than the pardoned believer; but "*scattering*" is equally legitimate and common; more strengthened by analogy, and more in keeping with the first clause, where the verb to *guard* stands more opposed to vagrant and distraught ideas. "**Dies;**" see Job 5: 2. Corruption is seated in the soul, but not out of reach by any means. A man can increase it. What we do outside kills inwardly. A man's counting-house might seem to have little to do with the

state of his soul, but it is shaping it all the time. If he *scatters his ways*, he is killing his soul; and what we are to remark is that there is an *ipso actu* condition of the effect (as in 11:19), which is expressed in the Hebrew. The vagrancy of a morning's worldliness is that much more death, as punctually administered as any of the chemistries of nature. The form is participial. It is “*in scattering*,” or *as “scattering,” his ways*, that “*he dies*.”

Not only a vaguer and more general obedience, but pointed gifts, the Wise Man recommends to the believer. Open generosities, he would argue, are a better thing than that vaguer *guarding of the law* (v. 16) which most readers might understand in the previous sentence:—

- 17** He that shows favor to the poor man, makes
a borrower of Jehovah;
and his transaction pays him.

17 He that hath pity
upon the poor lendeth
unto the **LORD**; and
that which he hath
given will he pay him
again.

The off-hand sense is no doubt correct; and, as a worldly maxim, *often* the munificent are rewarded in this world. A book of anecdotes might swell the list endlessly of men paid for doing good. But we are not to suppose the generous to suffer, and the saint might lose by being paid in money. The saint might need the chastisement of pecuniary distress. We are not to suppose, therefore, this sense to be the grand one. But the meaning is that obedience, if it be spiritual, is a positive thing; that it involves large and generous sacrifices; that it is, to “visit the fatherless” (Jas. 1:27), and to feed the hungry (Matt. 25:35); and that, in the grandest sense, he that does these things, “*makes a borrower of Jehovah*,” and that the transaction, under the grand head of *guarding his own soul* (v. 16), will **pay him** better than any less positive, and more mystic species of obedience. “*Makes a borrower;*” the simple Hiphil of the verb to *borrow*. It may be fancy, but *causing to borrow* seems to be more expressive than (as an equivalent) to *lend* (E. V.). We can *make* God borrow of us at any time among the widows and the orphans (Matt. 25:40; Jer. 49:11). “**Transaction;**” from a verb meaning to *deal*, whether well (11:17), or ill (Gen. 50:15). It is not, there-

fore, equivalent to *gift* (E. V.), and is the nominative, not the accusative (E. V.). It is not a *gift* paid back, but a *dealing* or "transaction," agreeing with the verb as subject, and itself, therefore, thoroughly *paying* the believer.

Not guarding the commandment (v. 16), and not making sacrifices (v. 17), what ought God to do with us? If He does not abandon us to our "*deep sleep*" (v. 15), He ought to chastise us. The Proverb pictures this in an earthly parent. He ought to chastise his son, not to destroy him:—

- ¹⁸ Discipline thy son because there is now hope;
but to kill him lift not up thy soul.

The lower and the higher in this Proverb are beautifully perfect. As an ordinary maxim, it is armed with two auxiliaries which make it singularly complete. First, that there is a time for rescue, and to hit that time is the sole purpose of chastisement; and second, that, on this very account, benefit, not resentment, is to mingle with the act. "*Discipline thy son because there is now hope.*" If there were no "*hope*," it would not be worth while to "*discipline*"; and, therefore, the Apostle, as well as Solomon, labors with the idea of how impertinent *wrath* is in parental chastisement. "*Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, lest they be discouraged.*" The direction fairly wreaks with practical utility. "*Discipline thy son,*" not "*while*" (E. V.), simply, but "*because* there is now *hope*." "*But to kill him;*" this is the plainest sort of Hebrew. It is a wonder that it has been so kept back. "*Bring them up,*" says the Apostle (Eph. 6:4) kindly, i. e., to use his most tender expression, "*in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*" But do not bring passion in, or "*provoke (them) to wrath.*" "*To kill him,*" as Solomon expresses it, "*lift not up thy soul.*" Do not wish him dead. Do not venom discipline by naked animosity. This is the human aspect. But now for the fine model of Jehovah:—"He does not afflict willingly" (Lam. 3:33). He follows this maxim; "*Discipline thy son because there is now hope.*" But Solomon wishes plainly to declare that to *kill him* He does not *lift up His soul*. He taketh no pleasure in the

death of him that dieth, but that all should turn and live (Ez. 33 : 11). It is evidently these great timbers of thought that Solomon is eyeing at the bottom of his structure. He is settling them along in place. Secularly, they may have but little connection. Spiritually, they are all morticed close; and, what is strictly to be noticed, they are all coincident with New Testament expressions. "*Lift not up thy soul;*" simply, *Do not desire;* a most common Hebrew idiom. "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul" (Ps. 25 : 1). "Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity" (Ps. 24 : 4). "At his day thou shalt give him his hire; neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and lifteth up his soul unto it." The meaning is, that either to wife or children we are not to "*be bitter*" (Col. 3 : 19); and that God, in the height of His judgments, warrants this great point of doctrine, that *to kill us He lifts not up His soul.*

Why does He punish us, therefore? For either of two reasons, either first, to chastise us for our own profit, or second, to judge us for the expiation of our guilt. Both are useful processes, but, Alas! one only to ourselves. The Proverb that follows adds this second philosophy of punishment:—

- 19 Roughness of anger lifts away penalty;
but if it delivers, it must do so continually.

19 A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment: for if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again.

Could anything be more keen? It is the exact rationale of the Pit. All pain expiates. In fact, expiation is the very necessity of torment. All guilt, like the weight of a clock, begins to expend itself when punishment begins. If we could hold still; that is, if we could keep from sinning, and ages rolled away, who can say that the horrible pit might not expiate the sum of our offence? At least, punishment expiates; and Solomon boldly declares, "**Roughness of anger lifts away penalty.**" But then he gives a further philosophy, when he says,—"**But if it delivers**" (i. e., the "*anger*," for the verb is feminine), if the sweep of the "*anger*" slowly "*lifts*" the "*penalty*," i. e. by *being* it, and thus exhausting the guilt, still what does it profit? Sin goes rolling on, and increasing above the penalty. If wrath works out any part of it, there is more behind. The account is

never caught up with. This is a strong text. A stronger for eternal punishment we have never met with. It states the whole necessity. The Almighty begins to punish, but as He gets great mountains paid off, more comes piling on. The grand penalty of sin is death; and it is by dint of that, that there can be no permanent deliverance, except by Him "who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10). Our English rendering, "*shall suffer punishment*" (E. V.), comes from the fact that the verb means "*lifts*" as well as "*lifts away*." But if we were to adopt that rendering, we would gain nothing in the grammar, and sink the sense (as, however, all do), and gain instead an unconnected and immaterial expression. "*Roughness*," by a change of reading, would be "*One great*." The bearing would be the same. So, "*if it delivers; it must, etc.,*" by the usual grammatical equivoque, as between the third person feminine and the second person masculine, may read, "*if thou etc.*" (E. V.). Either will suit the amended reading; but "*it*," as referring to "*anger*," is, of course, set closer to the sense. "*Roughness*" or *greatness*, whichever the word be, is not out of place. Of course, the rougher the anger, the faster is penalty worn away.

If such be the philosophy of *judgment*, how much wiser to choose *chastisement* :—

20 Hear counsel, and let discipline in; | 20 Hear counsel, and
that thou mayest be wise in thine after his- receive instruction,
tory. | that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.

Observe the finger on our only want! It is not "*counsel*," for that is given; or "*discipline*," for that presses upon the soul. It is to "**hear counsel, and let discipline in.**" Observe the intimation of our only difficulty. It is not pain, for the saint has often more of this than the sinner. It is not even our hellish pains, for they will never be our worst calamity, and might, if sin could stop (see 19:19), wear themselves away. It is our darkness. The Proverb states the great object of the sinner, a passing from darkness to light. Our chains are darkness. The great problem is a resiliency from death. a getting up from cor-

ruption. How beautifully this fits upon the other (v. 19)! “*Anger*” may indeed wear away “*penalty*,” but the misery is, when it has done so, “*it must do so continually*.” Observe the great remedy against this continued trespass. “*Hear counsel and let discipline in, that*,” instead of being a fool, forever, “*thou mayest be wise in thine after history*.” “*Let discipline in*.” The verb in Kal means to *confront*. In Pihel, as here employed, it has a permissive sense,—to *suffer to confront*, or to “*let in*.” For “*after history*” see 5:4; 14:12.

The “*counsel*” that it is recommended to us to “*hear*” (v. 20), is, nearly or more remotely as the case may be, “*the counsel of Jehovah*” (v. 21). There is something in the very idea of that, viz., the advice of our Maker, that ought to hasten us to take it:—

- 21 Many are the schemes in the heart of a man of the better sort; but the counsel of Jehovah as such stands. ²¹ There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.

“*Counsel*.” This word sometimes means “*purpose*” (Job 5:13, E. V.). The original includes both ideas. The “*counsel*” that a man holds within himself is either for himself or others. It fits him either for *advice* or *action*. The counsel of Jehovah, therefore, is that which He *enjoins*, or that which He *employs*, just as it may happen. But one is consentaneous with the other. It is that which He *enjoins*, of course, in the twentieth and in the present verse. And the idea of the present verse is, that we had better comply, and take it, because, as what it is, it must be sure to *stand*. “*Many are the schemes, etc.*” That is, varied, and not unitary like God’s, are the plans “*in the heart of a man*.” But what is the use of them? How can any of them prosper, if they differ from the plans of God? Where is the chance for a Creator to fail in anything? If He advise us, He can sustain us. How singular, if the case could happen, that an Eternal Providence should venture an advice, and a creature’s *scheme* could turn out to be the wiser of the two. “*As such*.” This is an emphatic pronoun (see Class X). If we were to translate, “*itself*,” we should throw the emphasis too much upon the “*counsel*.” Its being “*the counsel of Jehovah*”

is the great emphatic difference ; and “*as such*,” as against human “*schemes*,” how notoriously it is obliged to stand ! “**A man of the better sort.**” This is simply שָׁרֵךְ, one of the names for “*man*.” We do not always translate it as “*of the better sort*.” But it is rarely chosen listlessly. Here it creates an emphasis. The most imposing “*schemes*” belong to the intelligent and great. The world is full of them. How foolish to build them up ! Jehovah advises a whole new behaviour for His creatures. How mad to scheme away from it ! For, *many be the schemes of the very most intelligent of men ; but the counsel of Jehovah, as such, must be the one to stand.*

Moreover, if the most eminent of men fail, unassisted, how sweet to know that the humblest of men succeed, nay, find their success, in their very fear of the Almighty ! How sweet to know that the counsel of God is in the very line of our moral necessities !—

- 22** The pleasure of the commonest sort of man is his kindness ; and better off is a poor man than a false man of the better sort.
- 23** The fear of Jehovah serves as a life ; and he that is satisfied with it has a dwelling ; he shall not be visited as an evil.

22 The desire of a man is his kindness ; and a poor man is better than a liar.

23 The fear of the LORD tendeth to life ; and he that hath it shall abide satisfied ; he shall not be visited with evil.

“**Pleasure** ;” from a verb to *desire*. That it should mean “*pleasure*” is by no very difficult analogy. It sometimes means *a charm* (Gen. 49 : 26 ; see Gesenius), i. e., a “*pleasure*” to others ; which is a still more distant association. “**Man** ;” שָׁרֵךְ, in the first clause, and שָׁרֵךְ, in the second. By all means we claim an intended difference. No man is so coarse that being *kind* does not become his “*pleasure*.” And, however “*poor*” the “*man*” may be, he is unspeakably “*better off*” than he, who, though apparently of a better grade, is “*false*” to that higher nature. V. 23. “**The fear of Jehovah**” is the secret of such inward “*pleasure*.” “*The fear of Jehovah*” is “*a life*.” “**He that is satisfied with it has a dwelling.**” It is like house and home. It is an entire *living* to the spirit. It both shelters and entertains. And it is not only “*a life*” in itself, but

the man who possesses it, “shall not be visited as an evil.” In former sentences (see 13:17 and 17:20) the warrant for the expression *as* is to be found in the *in essentia*. Here it is from a noun in apposition. The meaning is alike. The wicked are swept out *as evils*. The righteous have escaped that extirpation. “*The fear of Jehovah*” is “*a life* *in itself*; and furthermore, it so gives “*life*,” that a Christian is no longer an “*evil*,” and no longer, therefore, has to be confined and trampled. “**Serves as;**” simply the preposition *as*. “*Satisfied*.” A man “*satisfied*” with fearing *God*, can live in it as a man can in a house. It has a sense of the richest permanence. “*Kindness*,” which is but one part of it, is itself a delight. And beyond all its quiet refreshments comes the superadded intimation that it rids us of the fate of being cast out “*as an evil*.”

If a good be so near us, then why not snatch it? This is the next confronting of a paradox. If love be itself a “*pleasure*,” and “*the fear of Jehovah*” so permanent “*a life*” that “*he that is satisfied with it*” greets it as an eternal “*dwelling*,” then why not more possess it? and, as “*the word is nigh*” us (Rom. 10:8), why not a prompter “**hand**” upon anything so close upon our seeking?

This Solomon explains:—

- 24** The sluggard hides his hand in the dish; | ²⁴ A slothful man
and will not so much as bring it to his bosom, and will not so
mouth again. | much as bring it to his mouth again.

“**Dish**,” not “*bosom*” (E. V.): more felicitous as “*dish*,” and superior, as it is now found, in philologic probability. In Eastern countries men thrust their “**hand in the dish**.” We see this from the speech of our Saviour. “He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish” (Matt. 26:23). Two points of the figure are to be held high:—First, the nearness of the hand to the mouth, and, therefore, the ease of partaking; and, second, the pleasantness of the food, nay, its necessity, to the indolent partaker. Could there be a more faithful picture? The counsel of the Lord; it must stand (v. 21). It agrees with the very hunger of our nature (v. 22). And yet, though its full advan-

tage is set directly within our grasp, we are too dull to lift a hand.

This terrible torpor trouble is the thing to unsettle. It must do much good, whether chastening or vindictive; either benefiting ourselves, or else, in our example, them who witness it:—

- 25 Smite a scorner, and it makes the simple
wise;
and reproof for the discerning causes
knowledge to be discerned.

25 Smite a scorner,
and the simple will beware;
and reprove one
that hath understanding,
and he will understand knowledge.

“**Makes wise** ;” a Hiphil. In many glosses (E. V. *et al.*) it loses its causative sense, and reads “*will beware* ” (E. V.). But we have examined every case, and are rarely persuaded of any intransitive signification. In this text there is no need of it. “**Simple** ;” not the “**scorner**,” necessarily, (who is smitten), but either he or any of the “*simple*” who may be looking on. So in the last clause; not the *reproved* simply, but witnesses. “**Reproof**” is a Hiphil infinitive. Judgment is a great enlightener; and hell itself will help the universe to *discern knowledge*.

The wisdom of throwing off sloth (v. 24), and listening to correction (vs. 20, 25), is enforced by the idea that depravity grows. Not only are lighter sins a sign that we would commit the heavier, but they are an actual apprenticeship to crime, and a school for a deeper wickedness:—

- 26 He that preys upon a father, will drive out
a mother;
a son who awakens shame, will also utterly
disgrace.

26 He that wasteth
his father, and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach.

The youth who will cheat his “governor” under the sportive plea, that the “old man” can stand it, is nourishing those traits, which would “drive out a mother” from the shelter left for her age. “*Drive out* ;” literally, “*make flee*,” or cause the “*mother*” to be glad to get away. Partly from dishonor! Light disgrace precedes utter mortification. Such is one ground for stopping sin at its beginnings.

But another is, that “**admonition**,” unless we actually “**hear**”

it (v. 20), itself debauches us. This has been suggested before (15 : 10). The wicked should wake out of his slumbers, (6 : 6), and escape “the wrath of the King,” (16 : 14), because the very disciplines of the King, if not *heard*, make him harder. The *hearing*, that the impenitent do, in the sense of attending church, and listening to the counsels of the good, is not a thing that they should leave off, but they should leave it off in its “**result**” of hardening them only in impenitence:—

- 27 Cease, my son, to hear admonition,
with the result of wandering further from
the words of knowledge.
- 27 Cease, my son, to
hear the instruction
that causeth to err
from the words of
knowledge.

“**With the result of;**” simply δ, as so often before. “**Wandering further;**” simply to *wander*; but it is an intense “*wandering*.” To *reel*, to *stagger* is its occasional sense (Is. 28 : 7); still stronger, to *be crazed*, in this very book (5 : 19, 20). As the straying flock naturally gets “*farther*,” we do not hesitate to supply that sense. The favorite cavil, that, if truth destroys, men had better avoid it, is not encouraged by this passage. It does not say, “*cease*,” as a naked charge; but “*cease*,” *with a certain unauthorized “result.”*

That casting out from the universe, of which we spoke (6 : 19), because each man is “**a witness**,” and the impenitent are *witnesses* to falsehood, is made more truly terrible, because, deceiving others, we are so horribly deceived ourselves. The possibility of deceiving others springs from our own utter insensibility to truth. Man is not insensible. He “**eagerly devours worthlessness.**” But the “*deep sleep*” into which sloth casts him, (19 : 15), is an insensibility as to eternal things:—

- 28 A worthless witness scorns judgment;
and the mouth of the wicked eagerly de-
vours worthlessness.
- 28 An ungodly wit-
ness scorneth judg-
ment; and the mouth
of the wicked devour-
eth iniquity.

“**Worthless;**” literally, *of Belial*; Belial being a compound word meaning, *of no profit*. *Witnessing* is a grand duty through creation, which God Himself carefully fulfills (Rom. 9 : 22, 23). “**Scorns;**” i. e. *is profoundly insensible to*. It is the exhibition of this that makes one of our most fatal *witnessings*. It is this

insensibility that gives quiet and respectful impenitents the title of "scorners" (v. 29). "Judgment;" rarely anything but God's judgment; His final and irrevocable award (see Class XLVIII). "Eagerly devours;" literally, *swallows down*. "Worthlessness;" not the same Hebrew as in the first clause, but one of a kindred signification. It is a common name for *iniquity* (Job: 31: 3.), but *iniquity* under that same vital phase of *emptiness*, and utter *vanity*.

Insensibility, however, instead of being any excuse, is met by that terrible feature of the perfect tense (14: 1.) in the next verse, which implies that "judgments" (as if by some old Minos) "are already fixed for scorners, and blows for the back of the stupid." God does not judge any body *de novo*, but *ex principiis*, and in the very build of the original creation:—

- 29 Judgments are already fixed for scorners; |
and blows for the back of the stupid. |
²⁹ Judgments are
prepared for scorners,
and stripes for the back
of fools.

"*Judgments*," not *judgments*, but a much rarer word; not *judgments*, but the "*judgments*" required to make them out. Before the lost are born, the "*judgments*" that condemn sloth, "are fixed" in the universe. "*Fixed*," literally, *made to stand*. "*And blows, etc.*" The plan of hell is imbedded in the natural creation.

CHAPTER XX.

Solomon seldom singles out a specific vice; and, when he does, it is often exemplary, or to be understood of any. He does single out drunkenness, however. Strikingly enough, the Apostle does so, and with exactly the same threatening. After mentioning other extreme crimes, he speaks of *drunkenness* (1 Cor: 6: 10);—"Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Solomon only translates it into his dialect of "*Wisdom*":—

- 1 Wine is full of scoff; strong drink is full |
of noise; |
and every one who gets astray by it fails |
of wisdom. |
^{WINE} is a mocker,
^{strong drink} is raging
and whosoever is de-
ceived thereby is not
wise.

"Full of scoff." Not only does a drunkard scoff when drunk, but he learns the art of scoffing if he is ever sober. "**Wine** and women destroy the heart." "**Full of noise.**" Seriousness is impossible under the excitement of the cup; and in that rage to drink again, through the interval of the debauch, the very thought of it is utterly improbable. "**Gets astray;**" a figurative predicate that we were discussing in the last chapter (v : 27). It sometimes means to *reel*, but originally to *wander*, and hence to *wander off*. "**Gets astray by it.**" The idea is, that the man who is a drunkard, is getting farther "*by it*" from "*wisdom*," and, unless snatched back, will get ever farther. "**Fails of wisdom;**" literally, *is not wise*. The tense is really future, but so are all the tenses in nearly all the Proverbs. They denote a continuous present. When the past is used, they become singularly intensive. (See the very last text). To say, however,—"*He that is led astray by wine, is not wise,*" would be miserably vapid. It means more than that:—viz. that he is *not*, and is not going to be. It means "*wise*" in the gospel sense. It means,—going astray by wine precludes wisdom. And though it would not be just to render it,—*Will not be wise*; it is only because God, in His infinite wisdom, may stop the drunkenness, and so abate the impracticable condition which is described as *getting further off through wine*.

How mad, therefore, is a gay wassail! It is described in the next verse (*quoad* the Almighty) as מִתְעַבֵּר, a very peculiar word. Our English Version has it,—“*Whoso provoketh him to anger.*” It is a reflexive. The root, however, means simply to *pass* or to *rush on*. The reflexive, therefore, would be, to *cause* or to *let oneself rush on*, (and with the pronoun added) *against Him*, i. e. the Almighty. The madness intended, therefore, is,—by wine or any other miserable recklessness, the allowing of ourselves to roll heavily against God. But let us give the whole Proverb:—

- 2 The roar as of a young lion is the terrible- | 2 The fear of a king
ness of a king. | is as the roaring of a
He that throws himself upon him, loses his | lion; whoso provoketh
life. | him to anger sinneth
against his own soul.

"Life." The common word for "soul;" a common word also for "life" (see Ex. 21:23): the occasional word for "appetite" (6:30); also for "throat" (Is. 5:14, Hab 2:5); originally for "breath" (Gen 1:20, 30.) It is hard often to choose the English. We would say "soul" here (E. V.), but for this consideration:—that these are secular Proverbs. Like the histories, and like the prophecies, of the Bible, we confront their lower sense first (see Introd : § 6). The wrath of a common "king" does not endanger the soul, so much as the "life;" whereas the term "life" sufficiently includes everything. **"Loses;"** usually translated "sins" (as in E. V.) But the original meaning is *misses* (see 8:36); as a mark, or a path, or a goal, may be *missed*. Translating "sins" necessitates "against" (E. V.), which is not in the Hebrew. It is always best to hug the original as closely as we can. The idea is, that, in the mad wassail of any life, he who just throws himself against the Almighty, misses life itself, insanely losing the sole object of his being.

That crazed dream, that there is a sort of independence in doing as men please, and a sort of heroism in "strife" with their Maker, the Wise Man dissipates by another adage:—

- 3 It is honor to the best sort of man to live | ^{3 It is an honour for}
away from strife; | a man to cease from
but every fool pushes recklessly on. | strife: but every fool
will be meddling.

We must be understood as omitting often secular explanations. Solomon is taking apothegms, true or untrue, and giving certainty to what they assert by applying it to religion. "**Best, etc.;**" the same **בְּרִאָה** we have so often spoken of. The more eminent the "man," the more sensitive for "strife," if "honor" were found to demand it. The **בְּרִאָה**, therefore, is not fortuitous. "**Live away from.**" Hereby hangs a philologic difference. The English Version has it, "cease." There are two distinct verbs. One means to *sit down*, and has just such an infinitive as this, often occurring. The other means to "cease." This last has no such infinitive, and no such derivative, except one seldom and with difficulty to be imagined. A

maimed man was to be paid (Ex : 21 : 19) for his “*ceasing*” (marg. E. V.); that is, as has been generally understood, for *his loss of time*. But how much more easy to imagine that he was paid for his *sitting down*, that is, for his *living*. More properly still, in the present case, is *living* better. The preposition “**from**” is adapted to either. But *living away from strife* is a more dignified picture; it being shrewder not to be embroiled at all, than to “*cease*” from a vulgar difficulty. We choose easily therefore. In no text of five (see Fuerst’s Con.) need the word mean *ceasing*; though, if it do, it is well to say, the doctrine would be the same. It is honorable to shun a quarrel. It is vulgar to have quarrels with men; how much more with the Almighty! For the double reason, therefore, of both taste and safety, it is only a “*fool*” who “**pushes recklessly on.**” “*Pushes on;*” a word commented on, 17 : 14. E. V.;—“*will be meddling* ;” Maurer;—“*exacerbatur*” (grows hot): De Wette and Umbreit;—“*ereifert sich*” (see 18 : 1). But chap. 17 : 14 seems to require the figure of waters *breaking forth*. So, also, is the philology. There is a word like it in the verse before; they being reflexives. The meaning is not so very different. In each the *drunkard* (v. 1), that is the *reeling sinner*, is just *throwing himself* against God. Madly, says the second verse; for he “*loses life* ;” and dishonorably, says the third; for “*it is honor to the best sort of man to live away from strife.*”

Now a new cavil, and a difficulty singularly real. It is that the Cerberus of debate always lurks at the gate of a new undertaking. If it is to plant, we have to “**plough**” in the cold. If it is to pioneer, we have to work in the forest. If it is to seek the Lord, we have to begin low down in our most hostile state. This really is one of the chief reasons of delay;—that turning is not the song of success, but the torpor of a confused repentance. The lost man will not endure the first discouragements; and so, when time for singing, having refused the “*plough*,” he will not need the sickle:—

- 4 He who is a sluggard by reason of the winter, will not plough.
He shall seek in harvest and there shall be nothing.
- 4 The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.

It is, perhaps, intentionally significant, that “*by reason of the winter*” comes after the “*sluggard*,” to express, more clearly, that the very sluggardism of the impenitent is helped by these early difficulties. Our Saviour implies as much, (Matt. 7: 13, 14), “Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in therat; BECAUSE strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life.” “*Does not plough by reason, etc.*” (E. V.), would make a good sense, but the other is the order of the Hebrew. “*Winter* ;” literally, *autumn*, from a verb to *pluck* (fruit, etc.). But it grew to mean the cold hemicycle, as for example (Is. 18: 6), “All the beasts of the field shall winter upon it.” “**Seek** ;” sometimes *ask* ; hence “*beg*” (E. V.). But that is not so natural, or unstrained, as the other and more original signification. “**And there shall be nothing** ;” literally, “*and nothing*.” Such tenses throw it upon us to give such English as seems best. And the rule ought to be, to shut out adventitious thought, and rein the idiom of the English as close as we are able. We say not, therefore, “*and have nothing*” (E. V.), but, more impersonally, “*there shall be nothing*.”

The inspired man meets the case of the difficulties at the start. He agrees that there are such, but still he insists that the light that we need is lurking most intimately near :—

- 5 Deep waters is counsel in the heart of a ^{5 Counsel in the}
man; ^{heart of man is like}
but a man of discernment will sink a ^{deep water: but a man}
bucket after it. ^{o f understanding will}
^{draw it out.}

“**Deep.**” This is the idea corresponding with the last verse. The Wise Man admits that it is far down. “**Counsel.**” The whole emblem finely illustrates what is true of the doctrine of the “*inward light*” as held by the “Friends.” All men have light, which, if they would follow, would lead them (granting that they persevere) into the light of the gospel (Rom. 1: 20). What better name for this than “*counsel?*” Alas! it lies “*deep.*” No man will follow it but by the Spirit of God. “**Man.**” This is the higher term for the more elevated class. We cannot be always translating it. But the selection is not fortuitous. On the

contrary it is made so as to be intense. If there were any class of men with whom “counsel” might lie on the surface, it might seem the educated class. The Wise Man intimates that it is as “deep” down with them as with the rest. Nevertheless it is there! How solemn that fact at the judgment day! “The word is nigh (us)” (Rom. 10:8). And “*a man of discernment* ;” i. e., the Christian. “Discernment” here, as everywhere else, means *piety*. Only the illuminated man, getting his light from its great Fountain, will be moved to go down into his “heart,” where the “counsel” lies waiting, and “draw” (E. V.) the “deep waters.”—“Draw it out” (E. V.). This is the more neat expression. But the verb means to *hang down*, hence to *let down*. This is the sense of all the cognate languages; to be *pendulous*, like the branches of a willow. Hence, a *door*, because it *hangs*. Hence the *poor* (or from a very similar verb) because they *depend*, or *hang feebly*. We have preferred to keep closely to the root. “Counsel in the heart” of the best natural men lies dangerously deep; but the man, beginning to be enlightened, will not be discouraged, as the husbandman is by the chilling seed time (v. 4), but will go down “after it.” To preserve the figure, the “waters” may be ever so “deep,” “but a man of discernment will sink a bucket,” and bring them up.

If the bucket is to be sunk, it is very well to caution the sinner against drawing up the wrong thing:—

- 6 Much of the mere man one calls his good-
ness;
but a faithful man, who can find?

6 Most men will pro-
claim every one his own
goodness: but a faith-
ful man who can find?

There is but one interpretation among commentators. Maurer, Umbreit, Zöckler and De Wette, Holden and Bertheau, all translate very much like the English Version. Glancing at the verse, בָּרְךָ מִתְּבָרְךָ might naturally seem to mean “many men.” Further search might make us pause. There is an expression, like this, meaning *many men*, but it is בָּרְךָ רַבָּךָ. We very soon find out that בָּרְךָ is not an adjective, meaning *many*, but a noun in the construct from בָּרֶךָ, meaning *abundance* or *multitude*. The

English Version, doubtless, saw this in translating, “*Most men* ;” literally, *abundance of man*, or *mankind*. This, all the modern commentators have seized upon. But, strange to say, there is no such other expression in Scripture ; and no frequent use of the construct בָּנָה at all. In all such cases of single use, it is well to look narrowly at everything. “*Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness* ” (E. V.), may be set down as having four likelihoods ;—first, that “*most men*,” or the mass of men, might translate מְלֹא בָּנָה ; second, that “*every one*” or *each* is the meaning in a number of cases (1 Ki. 20:20; Gen. 15:10) of the word שִׁירָא (man) which, evidently, it is in E. V. intended to translate ; third, that the meaning would be a very striking one ; and fourth, that it would admirably agree with the second clause. Many men will bestow multitudes of goods to feed the poor (1 Cor. 13:3), and be quick to parade their רַחֲם, or *kindliness of heart*, when “*a faithful man*” can hardly be hunted out. For example, men are quick to give, who will never pay their debts. There can be no doubt, therefore, about the value of the sense imagined. But now, in the first place, there is this very serious difficulty :—“*Proclaim*” (E. V.) in the form implied, never translates the word that is found in the original. That word means *call*. It rarely, if ever, means what the word *call*, in an awkward way, would not express. It is true it is made to speak of *proclaiming a fast* (1 Ki. 21:9) ; but *calling a fast* would not be so far out of the way. It means *naming* ; but *calling*, in our idiom, is used for *naming* just as well. We hear of *proclaiming liberty* (Is. 61:1), and *proclaiming peace* (Deut. 20:10), and *proclaiming a name* (Ex. 33:19) ; but the voice of the actual *crier* or *caller* is uppermost in all these ideas. *Proclaiming* one’s “*goodness*” presses the idea of *calling* so far, that it would be hard to match it among all Scriptural expressions. It is true this very writer may be translated (12:23) —“*The heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness* ;” but, though this stands perhaps solitary, there is more of *calling* or *crying out* in a heart’s uttering its own foolishness in spite of itself, than in a man’s more round about art of getting his kindness published, or making it renowned. At any rate, it sufficiently appears

that this Hebrew rarely straggles so far from its base; and, if there be another translation, more usual, backed by a still more impressive sense, it ought not to be hard promptly to accept it. Now a common use of the word to *call* is to *name*. It is found with two accusatives (Is. 60: 18). Those accusatives, precisely in order, are found in our text. The translation then, giving each word its room, would be nakedly this:—"Much of man (**בְּנָסָר**) a man (**בָּנִי**) will call his kindness, or his goodness." That is, "much of the mere man," much that is merely human. The two accusatives are this and "*his kindness* (or *goodness*)."
The word **בְּ** is sometimes used in naming (Gen. 1: 5); but not in all cases. The meaning is, that a man is apt to call mere animal traits, like amiableness, or good nature, by the name of "*goodness*"; and the caution is, that, seeking deep for piety (v. 5), we should be careful to take up with no such stupid counterfeit. Much of the mere "*flesh*," to borrow a New Testament expression, is kind and often honest. There is much of the mere man's native morality. In letting down our bucket (v. 5), we must take care not to take that for "*goodness*." There is a certain true *fidelity* that embraces everything. That is religion. It embraces God. It embraces spiritual *faithfulness*. It may be easily counterfeited. It has been the snare of our race to take what is "*of the mere man*," and confound it with it. How timely to give just this warning. And in view of the subtleties of the cheat, the Wise Man goes on with our case, partly assisting, partly invoking, a strict examination of our state.

First:—

7 He that takes his very walks of pleasure
in his integrity, is a righteous man.
Blessed are his children after him.

7. The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.

There is a twin passage to this. It is in the sixty-eighth Psalm (v. 21). Solomon is here telling who really is "**righteous**." David is there telling who only is lost. They resort to the same expedient. They take the verb to *walk*. They put it in the Hithpahel (reflexive) form. It means in that form *spazieren*, as the Germans say, that is, to *walk* for "*pleasure*."

The idea is of that free, easy, pleasant *walk*, which a man has when he just strolls along. The Psalmist tells us, "God will smite only his enemies, the hairy scalp of him that **takes pleasure walks** in his transgressions;" that is, that wilfully strolls along. The text of Solomon is just as delicate;—not the anxious act, that the sinner does to get to heaven; not the formal act, which the sinner does in stated service; not the showy act, which the man exhibits on days of pageant; but the easy act, which has subsided into a grateful habit. A man must have second nature in his holy living; and the easy strolling of a *walk* is a good depicting, either of the wilful lost, or of the rising life of the genuine believer. "*Righteous*;" not wholly good and upright, but "*righteous*" in the gospel sense: that is to say, pardoned and made better. The man is not only saved himself, but (unless for special recklessness) will save "**his children.**"

Solomon goes on, however, to the like thought to that of the Apostle (2 Tim. 2:19). Paul says,—God knows; whether we know after all our self-examinations, or not. He mixes together as this passage does, God's certain knowledge and our attempts to find out. He makes the former a warning to the latter. "The foundation of the Lord standeth sure having this seal,—'The Lord knoweth them that are His.' And,—'Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.'" So Solomon says:—

8 The king that sits upon the throne of judgment
winnows all evil with his eyes. 8 A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes.

We must be very careful, therefore, how we do our sifting. God's is perfectly complete. He sees "*all evil*." Not "*scattereth*" (E. V.). That would be very meaningless; but, (what *scattering* is cognate to,) the farmer's *sifting* of his harvest. God does it "**with His eyes.**" He "**winnows**" us at a glance. It is important, therefore, that we have something more than "*evil*," because "*all*" that, He shall *winnow* bodily away.

This is made the more solemn, because a great deal of "*evil*" (v. 8) we all necessarily confess:—

9 Who can say, I have cleansed my heart? I have become purified from my sin? | ⁹ Who can say, I
have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?

Observe these changes of tense. The uniform future he suddenly shifts, as in 11:7. He cuts off one favorite mistake. Not I *will* cleanse. That is easy to be said. But "**I have cleansed.**" I have actually expelled sin. The Wise Man in the question makes the point that the Apostle does (1 Jno 3:20). Our own heart condemns us; and God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

As a sort of refrain, at proper intervals, he rolls back significantly the picture of the balances:—

10 Divers weights and divers measures, even they both are an abomination to Je- | ¹⁰ Divers weights,
and divers measures,
both of them are alike
abomination to the
LORD.

The nouns are repeated. There is no adjective answering to "divers." "*A stone and a stone, an ephah and an ephah, even they both, etc.*" A few sentences further (v. 23) the like (never exactly the same) comes in in a like juncture, and is to be repeated over again. There may be a danger that we fail to understand it. It is not severity. It is not God's wrath harshly stated. It is rather the opposite. God deals with necessary justice. He never defrauds. He weighs to every man right. To suppose Him harsh is a mistake. All is down in the arithmetic. He could not govern; nay, He could not *be*, unfairly. "*A stone and a stone*" by the very necessities of Deity are *in se* "abomination."

To come back to tests, that homeliest one of simply what a man does is all that can be decisive. Our writer chooses out a word next that has two peculiarities. It means *trifling "doings,"* and, therefore, is a better sign than more solemn ones; and it means *repeated doing;* and, therefore, is a better sign than what is more studied out, because occasional. It is never used in the singular. The original of its verb means to *drink again*; hence *to do anything again*, reminding us of the good easy thought of *strolling, or pleasure walking* (v. 7). We are to picture our very most familiar acts; and the expression "even"

is to meet that view,—that they may seem not important; nay, “**a child**” is specified, to lay further emphasis on that more child-like and random feature:—

- 11** Even by his common doings a child shall make himself known. | **11** Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work *be* pure, and whether *it be* right.
Is he pure? is just also this,—Is his work right?

We cannot translate the second clause. Like “a stone and a stone” (v. 10), such packing is too terse for English. Nor can we brook the English Version. “**Common doings**” are in the same category with “**work**.” How can one be the test of the other? The only room for a proposition is, obviously, for this: —*A child is known by his doings; and the question,—Is he pure? is but the question,—Is his work right?* Now the possibilities of such a rendering depend upon a particle. We have seen in the preposition **בַ** how much such a word may overgo its usual sense (14:35; 16:1; 18:1). **כִּי** usually means *if*; but it has in it the force of a query, and it is meant to do that service in more than one instance (1 Ki. 1:27; Job 31: *passim*) of inspired writ. **כִּי**, therefore, introduces a query twice in the second clause. Schultens, Parkhurst, Geier, Gousset, Dathe and Holden all write “*dissembles*” in the first clause, instead of *is known*. We state the fact as a spur to study; but the commoner meaning grows closer out of the root, and sits closer to the inspired connection.

It is to be noticed, that the whole thing of spiritual tests makes its appeal to human intellect. What a poor thing that is! It is a solemn fact that the question, whether we are lost or saved, offers itself for every Christian to a mean intelligence. That thing, most naturally, disturbs us. I say, I hope I am a Christian. But who hopes? Why, a poor weak deceiver, pulled or not pulled ignominiously out of the fire. The Proverb that follows seems to bear upon this point:—

- 12** The hearing ear and the seeing eye; | **12** The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the even both of them are the work of Jehovah. | **12** The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the even both of them are the work of Jehovah.

It might seem as though this meant,—“He that planted the

ear, shall he not hear?" (Ps. 94:9). It certainly does mean that in ready inference.* But we cannot shake off the belief that it means that the God who saves us, gives us the "ear" to hear it, and gives us the "eye" to see it, and keeps us from despair. It is so, eminently, with dying grace. We often tremble lest we die in terror. But "**the hearing ear, and the seeing eye,**" and the death-sights as we launch, "*even (all) of them are the work of Jehovah.*" Blessed be God, He props His saints in proportion to their need; and *He makes them to feel hope, just in proportion as it is for their good to feel it.* So much for His people. But you may ask, May *I* not be deceiving myself? Yes. For the impenitent may deceive themselves, though not believers; and, practically, we admit, at once, that here one may float again from the moorings of his confidence. How do I know that I am a believer?

Now to meet all this a Proverb follows with just the advice of the Apostle (Phil. 3:12, 13). If worried by doubt, we are to push forward in obedience. If deficient in the gift of hope, we are to be roused the more, and work the harder, in the pursuits of piety. This was Paul's plan. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Quit examining proofs, and create the more of them; and take in hope, not by glooming over the past, but by realizing grace in the struggles of the future.

So speaks what follows:—

¶3 Love not sleep lest thou come to poverty. Open thine eyes. Be filled with good.

¶3 Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty: open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.

A man can have no more hope than piety; at least no ground for hope except piety. Since piety shows itself in working (see v. 11) he ought to shake off "sleep," and "give diligence," according to the maxim of the Apostle, "to make (his) calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10).

He ought the more to do this, because the grace that he

* A Proverb may be used in all senses besides its connection.

buys, will appear a great deal brighter to him than it does while he is buying it:—

- 14** Bad, bad, says the buyer;
but as he takes himself away, then he boasts. | 14 It is naught, it is
naught, saith the buyer: but when he is
gone his way, then he boasteth.

This is a homely Proverb; most graphically true of men's trading; but, applied, like the Unjust Steward, to the case of piety. The Proverb about "winter" (v. 4) is true. Men get piety in a cold and stormy season. The counsel of truth lies deep (v. 5); and sinking the bucket is not very pleasant in those early and tempted periods. Men seek faith when it has very little attraction for them. But the bargain, coldly made, grows brighter as we grow in the possession. "**Bad, bad says the buyer.**" Plenty say this, who never make the glorious purchase. But of those who do, the objections, first made, half linger after the bargain's close. No living Christian ever understood his treasure till long after he had really bought it.

And yet it was just as rich. When we were blind, it was just as bright. Our coldness to it did not affect its value. And this by the expressive word **眞**, the Wise Man announces in the next Proverb:—

- 15** There actually is gold, and plenty of pearls, 15 There is gold, and
a multitude of rubies:
and precious vessels, in the lips of knowl-
edge are a precious
jewel.

"**There actually is;**" simply **眞**. "**Vessels;**" this is a singular. It is so in the Greek (Rev. 18:12). There is a collective singular. It means *treasures*; for "*vessels*" were Eastern treasures (see Ezra 8:25). "**In.**" There is no Hebrew here. "**Lips**" are in apposition. It means, "*lips, etc., are* treasures. "*Lips of knowledge*" mean that *wise or pious utterance* that represents all pious obedience. And it means to say that these fruits of faith (so scorned by the buyer, v. 14) are actual and priceless treasures.

If a man refuses these, and clings to the old curse, the Proverb assures us that he may be given up:—

16 Take his garment because he has gone security for a stranger; and on account of strange people make him give a pledge.

16 Take his garment that is surely for a stranger; and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

The secular Proverb means that securityships are so fatal, that, if called to trust one who is under them, we had better make ourselves sure by taking "his (*very*) garment;" that in trade with a man who "has gone security for a stranger," we had better take in pawn some absolute property. The moral is, that securityships are so unsafe, that we may treat the man as one already ruined. But, in the spiritual world, it means (see chap. 6) that a man who holds fast sloth (v. 13), holds fast a bond of eternal vengeance; that he renews it by his wilful act (17:18); that it is a bond to a Friend (6:1), but that Friend forced *ex lege* to collect it: that if now at this late day he holds it on, Stand clear from him! He will certainly be lost. "*Take his garment.*" That is, use the last resort, as against the most hopeless bondsman. "**And make him give a pledge:**" because, under his dreadful debts, he is sure to perish.

The last verse, therefore, is a mere painting of guilt. Why do we so nurse it, then? Because, says the next verse, it is a "*bread of deceit*" (v. 17). The writer has spoken (v. 13) of a "*bread*" that appears poor to those first buying it. "Bad, bad says the buyer." The point of that Proverb is, that bought grace appears better the longer we have bought it. "There is actually gold and plenty of pearls and precious vessels in the lips of knowledge" (v. 15). He is now to show that it is just the opposite with the "*bread of deceit*." It is "*sweet*" while we are buying it, but terrible and "**filled with gravel stones afterward:**"—

17 Sweet to the most intelligent man is the bread of deceit; but afterward his mouth shall be filled with gravel stones.

17 Bread of deceit is sweet to a man: but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.

"*Bread.*" There is a passage in the Prophet which puts this emblem in the very happiest light. He says, "Wherfore will ye give money for that which is not bread?" He implies,

therefore, two things, first,—that the objects of the worldling seem to be “*bread*,” and, hence, that he spends treasure for them; but second, that they are “*not bread*,” which is a capital account of “*the bread of deceit*.” “Sweet to the most intelligent man;” simply “sweet וְנַדֵּד;” but we hate to lose what is distinctive (see Is. 2:9); indeed we see a signal cause for it. *The man of the higher class* makes a better instance of the Proverb, because the beggarly objects more notably deceive when they deceive the intelligent and elevated. “*The bread of deceit*” more signally deceives because we know of its deception.

Therefore the inspired man makes a very peculiar appeal. What could seem to be more impudent? He begs men to look before they leap. What is apparently more imbecile than to ask men to take grave “counsel” before they launch out upon important schemes. And yet the Wise Man builds upon the fact that men know more in matters of religion than they ever follow. They know inwardly that they are deceived, and yet recklessly perish. Hence the next verse:—

18 Do thou be fixed in plans by counsel;
and by helmsmanship make war.

18 Every purpose is
established by counsel;
and with good advice
make war.

Counselling even with our infirm poor hearts would save us. All, unless it be heathen, would go to heaven, if they advised about the way to it as they do about the smallest matters. “He that is born, is listed;” but all would conquer in the fight, if they battled as they do the battles of the world. “**Do thou be fixed.**” This is the Niphal. It might be the feminine third person. It might refer to “*plans*.” “*Let plans be fixed by counsel*” (see E. V.). But the irregularity of a plural with a singular is not compensated by the sense (see 12:25); and, therefore, there is no possible motive for a neglect of grammar.

While men have sense enough to be saved if they would only use it, they have also folly enough to be lost, even if they are in the lighter grades of impenitence. All sin is cousin-german to every other. The least share of it is to be drawn off from, as of a piece with its worst excesses:—

19 He that will disclose a secret will gad as a ¹⁹ He that goeth about *as* a talebearer reveals secrets; therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.

This seems bluff teaching, but, therefore, Solomon chose it. It was doubtless a country Proverb; and, as on everybody's lips, all would understand it. Solomon is begging everybody to *be wise*. He would teach that there is no resting-place in iniquity; that each lust is a door into hell; that tattling is the seed of calumny; and so the lightest of our faults has arched passages into the very heaviest of our iniquities.

He throws in a word, next, about another element of risk We need advisers. We need everything that can save the dead. We need advice from those above us; above all from the Almighty. There is something dreadful, Solomon thinks, in casting this advice off; in casting anything off, when we are so in danger. He seems to think, too, that help from others is so easily offended from us:—

20 He that curses his father and his mother, ²⁰ Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall go out in the eye of the ^{father or his mother,} his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.

We spoil the sense if we say "*in utter darkness*" (Zöckler); for that is merely the common thought, that it "**shall**" utterly "**go out**." But the meaning is, that, whereas in ordinary dark times we did not miss the light, and, therefore, flouted it in impenitent neglect, it will fail us just "*in the eye of the dark*." Literally, the *pupil, the little man* of the eye. When God has been scoffed away, and all our holiest influences banished, in the time of our peace, our "**lamp**," that is, our poor earthly illuminations, will utterly fail us, and that "*in the (very) eye of the darkness*."

I can hardly describe the delicacy of the next pictures, as they first touched my thought. They are so thoroughly real. Men are not always careless about religion, but have serious thoughts about it; and are only waiting to get through business, and eagerly snatch a competence. These temporizing policies are the most common of all, and are rather the greedy earnest-

ness of one pressed by worldly care, and yet with the soberest thoughts of attention hereafter. Solomon denounces this :—

- 21** An inheritance greedily seized in the beginning,
also, as its after history, shall not be blessed.
22 Say not, I will make the evil good ;
wait on Jehovah, and let Him help thee.
- 21 An inheritance
may be gotten hastily
at the beginning ; but
the end thereof shall
not be blessed.
22 Say not thou, I
will recompense evil ;
but wait on the Lord,
and he shall save thee.

“ **Greedily seized.**” The Puhal of a verb meaning to *shake*. *A possession trembled into*, or *got with trepidation*. What could be more graphic ? As a thief seizes the ravished gains all *trepidated* or *shaken*, so a poor sinner steals on against the truth ; at no time square-planted ; in no instance poised with a sense of quiet right ; on every day living by stealth ; always feeling that he will steal but a few hours from God, tying a knot, as a sailor would against a storm, and then that he will certainly go, and bravely begin back and perform his duty. The Wise Man announces that all this is insane. The idea is, that that is not a prize that we are clutching after. The language is singularly shaped :—“ **An inheritance greedily seized in the beginning, also, as its after history, shall not be blessed.**” Let us miss no terse particle. “ *Also.*” That is, it was not blessed “ *in the beginning :*” it “ *shall not be blessed as* (expressed by an apposition) *its after history.*” Alas ! for us ! These snatchings destroy us at the first, and disappoint us wretchedly in the after judgment. V. 22. But says the inspired man, putting his finger now with amazing skilfulness,—Say not, We “ **will make good** ” this badly built masonry. We will set something right, on top, that will keep it. Our children are all in rags ; or our property needs to be rescued ; or our affairs are just now distressed ; we will make a rush to get everything in place, and then turn ourselves to Wisdom. All this the expert king puts in a single purposing :—“ *I will make good evil.*” We wish that we could translate it just thus ; but look at the ambiguity. It is not that he would make “ *good* ” to be “ *evil*,” as our English idiom might mean, but that an “ *evil*,” confessedly one, of working to the neglect of God, he will so “ *make good* ” (it is a single Hebrew expression, *complete, finish, compensate*), that it will

help afterward with his piety. It will give him a quiet house. He will have his children schooled. He will be able to help the church. The Proverb denounces precisely this thing:—“*Say not, I will make good the evil. Wait on Jehovah, and let Him help thee:*” that thorough sort of “*help*,” which is often translated *save* (Ps. 28:9).

We cannot get advantage over Providence. This thing of snatching, where God is in the case, which even Christians attempt sometimes, by adding their accounts in church, or by foragings across the border, are all folly. The inspired man brings heavily back the chorus about the “**weights**” and “**balances**:”—

- 23** An abomination to Jehovah are divers weights; and balances of deceit are no good. | ²³ Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance is not good.

Notice the change. These words are never tiresome. They always vary one way or the other. Here they are to be applied to man. The Problem has been to *make good evil*. The old chorus closes the picture. It can't be done. The very attempt is “*abomination*.” “**An abomination to Jehovah are divers weights; and balances of deceit are no good.**”

What “*good*” could be possible, when God absolutely plants all men's “*steps*”?

- 24** The steps of a powerful man are from Jehovah; then a common man, how shall he discern his way? | ²⁴ Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?

How hopeless to snatch anything out of God, if His Providence is so supreme. “**Powerful man;**” not שָׁרֵךְ this time, but בָּרֶבֶת strong man. שָׁרֵךְ is still the opposite. *If a strong man has every step planted for him, how useless for any “common man” to attempt any cross stroke (v. 22) to fortune.* The moral is, punctually to do our duty; to start in it at once; to trust only in Providence; and not to dream of seizing any advantage by a selfish procrastination.

As to good out of evil (v. 22) in the alchemy of the future

and promises that are to serve for facts, the next verse announces that they are an actually achieved disaster:—

- 25 An act of consecration such that after vows | 25 *It is a snare to the
there comes inquiry as a snare has actually man who devoureth
swallowed a man in.* *that which is holy,
and after vows to make
enquiry.*

The reading is true in grammar, and has a cause for all its construction as a text. “**As a snare there swallows down a man.**” This is the beginning, and leaves room that “*what is consecrated*”, which is expressed by the one word that follows, should be qualified by the whole of the second clause. It is not everything that is *consecrated* that is “*a snare*,” but that sort of consecrated thing that “*after vows*” is the subject of “*inquiry*.¹” The idea is, that quieting conscience by “*vows*” is a dreadful “*snare*.²” They are baited by the relief they give; but they draw in and quiet the sinner in a lost impenitence. For the Almighty knows beforehand the falseness of our vows:—

- 26 A winnower of the wicked is the wise king; | 26 *A wise king scat-
and he brings the wheel over them.* *tereth the wicked, and
bringeth the wheel over
them.*

Bertheau objects that “**the wheel over them**” should precede the “**winnower**; and Zöckler replies by giving up the idea of *threshing*, and making “*the wheel*” mean torture and judgment. It is obvious that this is a mistake. But the whole cast of the emblem, if we study it, thoroughly solves the puzzle. God not only *winnows “the wicked,”* but He brings them into that state where they can be *winnowed* most easily. He not only *sifts*, but *threshes* them. And, though it may be true that this last process precedes the other, yet it is so much the more solemn of the two, that He states it last by way of intensity. When we come to judgment, the lost will have been so tried; they will have promised so often, and failed; they will have sinned so often, and repented; they will have been spared so often, and relapsed; that they will be brought into the exact shape most thorough for the sifting. Indeed, one purpose for the impenitent is, that they shall so expound all forms of folly, that,

when they come to be exhibited at the last, like straw under the crush of "*the wheel*," they shall be altogether ready for the winnowing.

Strange enough, our own conscience is to do the work. God does not need any preparatory threshing. He sees our spirits without any winnowing at all. It is to exhibit us at the last day to ourselves. And this is the meaning of the next verse :—

- 27** The lamp of Jehovah is the spirit of a man,²⁷ The spirit of man
searching all the chambers of the belly. <sup>is the candle of the
LORD, searching all the
inward parts of the
belly.</sup>

"**Spirit.**" This is not the word used for God's Spirit. It is a word more human. It does not take God's miracle to show men to themselves. The light at last of unsanctified intelligence will glare upon them in the remorses of the pit. So also now. "**The spirit of a man**" is God's "**lamp**." If we would follow its teachings, it would be His "**lamp**" to save us. It would lead us out of our gloom to the living Spirit. It is God's "**lamp**" in another way. He puts that Spirit in it. (Rom. 1: 20; Jo. 1: 9). It is the *chance* of the sinner, that he has a light perpetually with him, dim in the distance always, would he but grope his way.

Such statements are hard. And therefore Solomon gets back, as he often does (14: 22; 17: 17), to "**mercy and truth.**" It is not so much God, as eternal verity. It is well, when doctrines become difficult, to interpose that principle. If we kick against fact, it is not really against Heaven, but against eternal rectitude :—

- 28** Mercy and truth stand guard over a king;²⁸ Mercy and truth
and he has propped his throne by mercy. <sup>preserve the king; and
his throne is uphelden
by mercy.</sup>

"**Has propped.**" It must be a thing of the past (see 24: 27). He "*has*" done it. All dynasties *have been* kind. If they are cruel now, it must be like the weight of a clock, running down. There *was* kindness. "**Mercy and truth**" must at some period or other have builded the "**throne**."

One is not a judge of those things that he does not possess.

If “mercy and truth” belong to the “King,” (v. 28), we are not a judge of Him, unless we possess His qualities. Mark this fresh reason, therefore, for not cavilling. A man best appreciates the attributes by which he is characterized himself:—

- 29 Glory with young men is their strength; 29 The glory of
young men is their
strength; and the
beauty of old men is the
gray head.
and beauty with old men is grey hair.

They have these things, and, therefore, “grey” age is apt to despise mere “strength,” and stout youth to undervalue the experience of age. We must be careful that not on this account we cavil against the mysteries of Heaven. “With:” literally, “of.” The arrangement is just the same as where anything is said to be “abomination to Jehovah.” The Hebrew is “of.” “Young men” cannot conceive of the satisfactions of “old men.” How wise, therefore, to remember that man cannot conceive of what shall be satisfactory to God:

Especially in respect of “evil.” Solomon gives a sharp hint as to this most pervading and all-agitating of all agitating grounds of cavil:—

- 30 The welts of a wound cleanse though as an evil; 30 The blueness of a
wound cleanseth away
evil; so do stripes the
inward parts of the
belly.
so do stripes the very chambers of the belly.

Such is all we know of it. “**Welts:**” the tumid and purple confines of “a wound.” They are “an evil”; that is, they are both painful, and deformed. But they have a clear office, and that is to purge away the sore. So “stripes,” though they amount even to the permission of sin, can have no fuller unfolding of their puzzle than that they are to make the purer the very depths of the creation. “**Cleanse, though as an evil;**” literally, “cleanse in an evil.” This is a most interesting case of that use of *in* for “as,” (*in* essentia, 3: 26), which here has been unobserved, and which everywhere greatly relieves obscurities of Scripture (see Class XXVI, also Ps. 39: 6). “**Chambers of the belly;**” i. e., *the innermost existence of anything*.

CHAPTER XXI.

A conspicuous instance of what the last verse aimed to clear up would be God's hardening Pharaoh (Ex. 7: 3), or predestinating the betrayer (Acts 2: 23). The grappling of this, in the next verse, is to be of the very most naked manner:—

- 1** Streams of water is the heart of a king in
the hand of Jehovah; THE king's heart is
in the hand of the
LORD, as the rivers of
water: he turneth it
whithersoever he will.
upon anything He pleases He turns it.

Could anything be more bold? Mark the compass: first, of subject; the whole *stream*, as the gardener turns it; second, of object; "**anything He pleases**"; and third, of *sovereignty*; its pleasing Him; that being the only test. "**Streams**"; rather "*channels*," (*ex radice dividē*, see Peleg, which has the same spelling Gen. 10: 25). Thus, of course, there comes intensity of meaning. The "**king**" may be a Cæsar. His lip (16: 10) may make new geographies. His "**heart**" may change the history of all things. And yet, like a vineyard's "*channels*," diverted by a child, this Pharaoh's heart is in the fingers of the Most High. How foolish Arminianism if God is to rein-in the universe! "**Upon anything.**" Not *toward* anything. A stream may be turned in a new direction, to get rid of it. God has no such "*streams*." It is turned *on* something. For God has an end to answer, when He rules even the vilest of the fiends.

The terrible implication before alluded to (16: 1), which all this seems to show, of God with wickedness, brings in the same Proverb again as in 16: 2:—

- 2** As to the whole way of a man, right in
His own eyes,
and weighing out hearts, is Jehovah. ² Every way of a
man is right in his own
eyes: but the LORD
pondereth the hearts.

All that God does is by the Spirit. He creates by the Spirit (Job 26: 13). He gives common intelligence by the Spirit (Job 32: 8). He gives *heart* by the Spirit. Solomon, in repeated instances, uses *heart* for *piety*. If God has the "weigh-

ing out (of) hearts," He can raise or lower a man in the possession of the Spirit, quite as He pleases. Then, if He *weighs out* common intelligence, and gives a man just what He wills, He turns him like a river. For all this, in our text He declares, that "**As to the whole way of a man (He) is right in His own eyes.**" He has distinctly canvassed Calvinism, therefore, and will be ready for it in the day of judgment. We had better be careful how we cavil. One flash will convince us at the last. Or, if we blaspheme forever, it will only be on the principle (20 : 29), that "*grey hair is beauty with old men;*" that we cannot understand other people's attributes; that God is high above us; and we do not possess the "*mercy and truth*" (20 : 28) that would enable us to apprehend His doing. "*Weighing out.*" Exegetes render this, *weighing* (E. V. "*pondereth*"). Their idea would be, *finds their weight*. A collation of the passages carries us a degree farther, to the idea of *measuring out*, as a druggist does when he gives the bolus. Such seems the sense in every instance with this particular word.* In a former

* It will not take many type to give all the instances of **לְפָנֶיךָ** that are found in the Bible. Reduced to its last point,—Does it mean to *find the weight*, or to *give by weight*? as with a grocer, that he finds the weight of a certain flour, or that he gives a certain weight of flour? There are but sixteen cases of the verb, of which two have been already treated. Of the remaining fourteen, just half are alike, and are in Ezekiel. These probably look to the root of the verb for their sense, and are rightly translated "*is equal*." "*The way of Jehovah is not equal*" (Ex. 18 : 25): the root of the verb meaning to *level*, or make *even*. But if it means "*weighed*," as some might insist, does it mean that God's way has not been weighed, in the sense of having its weight found out? or, that it has not been made of the proper weight? Plainly the latter. "*O house of Israel! Is not my way weighed out?* Are not your ways not weighed out?" Of the seven remaining cases one is in Proverbs (24 : 12), and will appear *in situ*. One is in First Samuel, (2 : 3), "*Talk no more so exceeding proudly, &c., for Jehovah is a God of knowledge, and actions have not been weighed out.*" That is:—*You, who confessedly have not weighed out your actions, do not be found, &c.; for Jehovah is a God of knowledge, and the great account is against you.*" It is true, here is a varied reading; but this is the *textus receptus*, though the E. V. has chosen the other. Of the five remaining, two are in Isaiah, (chap. 40 : 12, 13), "*Who hath meted out Heaven, &c.*" (E. V.); literally, *weighed out?* "*Who hath weighed out the Spirit of Jehovah, or, being the man of his counsel, has taught Him?*" evidently a giving out by weight in either instance. Job 28 : 25, "*To make the weight for the winds, and he weigheth the waters by measure*" (E. V.). Ps. 75 : 4, "*I bear up the pillars of it* (E. V.);" literally, *I weigh the pillars of it*; i. e., *put them in of the right weight*, (or, better still, *level them*). (2 Ki. 12 : 11). "*And they gave the money, being told, into the hands,*" &c., (E. V.). These are all the cases. There are some nouns, but with a like run of sense. We are not speaking now of other verbs; but this verb **לְפָנֶיךָ** seems evidently to imply a *measuring out* (or a making of a certain weight) the *heart* or the *money* that may be the thing in question.

Proverb (16 : 2) it was more evident. There, "ways" is plural. Hence, that it is God that is talked of as "*pure*," "*pure*" being singular, is the parsing that relieves the grammar. There, too, the word is "*spirits*," which is more suitable as being *weighed out* than "*hearts*." But, in both cases, the thought comes in after a Calvinistic speech, and exactly at the point to relieve a suggested difficulty. "*Way*" is without the preposition *to*, but has a sense ("as to") which is not unusual with the accusative (see Class XIII.), as though *to* were present.

Men's hearts are moved by God like "*streams of water*" (v. 1). Nevertheless (v. 2) as to their "*way*," He is conscious that He is "*right*," however wrong the "*way*" that He controls; and with this rightness the mode of His control has much to do; for He is simply "*weighing out hearts*." By a step further, however, not only is He right, but, as the next verse would argue, He is nothing else. Not only is God's desire right, but right is His desire. The one great hunger of the Almighty is the mere rightness that our cavils would impugn:—

- 3 To execute righteousness and judgment | ^{3 To do justice and}
is more the choice of Jehovah than sacri- | judgment is more ac-
fice. | ceptable to the LORD
than sacrifice.

"**Sacrifice**;" literally, *slaughter*. But with slender exception, the slaughter is a slaughter for sacrifice. Slaughter for sacrifice is of three kinds; (1) when God sacrifices the lost in hell; (2) when God sacrifices His Son upon the cross; (3) when men sacrifice beasts upon the altar. All three sacrifices are less "**the choice of Jehovah**" than Himself or the creation's being righteous. This is the distinct idea of the Proverb. Do not upbraid God for causing evil; for He not only observes right in causing evil, but He causes evil for the sake of being right. He does not love slaughter. He does not love the slaughtering of the lost in hell. He did not love the slaughtering of His Son upon the cross. He did not love the slaughtering of beasts year by year continually. On the contrary, He does love "**righteousness**"; and, therefore, He does love, in the severities that men impugn, that very element of "*right*" (v. 2) which is the attribute that they would bring into the

question. “**E**xecute;” literally, “*do*.” We say “*execute*,” because to *do judgment* is not really English. “**J**udgment” is that award of court to the idea of which the word ought ever to be limited (1 : 3). “**I**s more the choice;” simply the passive (Niphal) participle of the verb to *choose*. We are to include the subordinate and less important lesson, that, doing “*righteousness*” Himself, He prefers the right doing of His creatures to any form of sacrifice or possible service that they can ever render (Ps. 51 : 16).

Nevertheless, though righteousness is more God’s choice than any remedial sacrifice, yet how glorious Christ’s sacrifice in its pride and blessing for “**t**he wicked:”—

- 4 Elation of eyes and dilation of heart,
the very light of the wicked, is the Sin-Of-fering.
4 An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.

Pride and arrogance are rebuked under these very terms elsewhere; but so is boasting; and yet observe the Apostle (Gal. 6 : 14); “God forbid that I should glory (literally, boast), save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Proverbs were the preaching of Solomon’s day. And the extraordinary trait, that brightens as we advance, is the specific resemblances of Old and New Testament evangelization. “**E**lation; *height*. “**D**ilation;” *breadth*. “**L**ight;” a contested word. It might mean “*fallow ground*” (Jer. 4 : 3). The balance seems to be on the side of “*light*” (1 Ki. 11 : 36; Prov. 13 : 23). Either would make a kindred sense. “**Sin-Offering**;” literally, “*sin*.” We sometimes hear that it *may* mean “*sin-offering*.” The truth is, it *must* mean “*sin-offering*,” and is so translated (E. V.) (I mean this specific derivative) in almost all the cases in which it occurs in Scripture. This seems never to be noted. Whole tribes of instances occur in Leviticus. It is hardly used for anything else up to this book of Proverbs. We have already seen (10 : 16; 13 : 6; 14 : 34) how sadly we have been kept in ignorance of this fact. When Paul says, “He hath made Him to be sin for us” (2 Cor. 5 : 21), he is not straining speech, so much as echoing idioms that might be heard in the synagogue any Sabbath day. “*Elation of eyes and dilation of*

heart;" i. e., universal comfort. "The very light of the wicked;" i. e., in the very eyeball of the darkness (20:20). Not so grateful to God on man's part as his original obedience (v. 3), but still life from the dead to man, "is the Sin-Offering."

Put, now, two things together; first, the completeness of this "Sin-Offering;" and, second, how counsel, like deep waters, is in every man's heart (20:5; Rom. 1:20), and we have the truth that follows:—

- 5 The close reckonings of a decided man
result only in profit;
but of every hasty man only in want.

⁵ The thoughts of
the diligent tend only
to plenteousness; but
of every one that is
hasty, only to want.

"The close reckonings;" literally, "*the calculatings.*" "Of a decided man;" literally, "*cut.*" "Decided" means *cut* in the Latin. We are to imagine a *prompt, incisive* coming to a determined point. Put those two thoughts together,—(1) *Close calculation*, and (2) *decisive action*. The two will make any body a Christian. Solomon is fairly loaded down with that belief (2:1-5; 10:4; 12:24; 22:29; 27:23). Haste, indigestion, headlong-ness, an eager snatching after this world's provisions, all are paintings with him of the soul's impenitence. He clearly teaches in this Proverb that a prompt use of all we know, and a following of our thought, will bring us to the Saviour; and that the close calculations of the "hasty;" close cypherings, short of real convictions; worldliness, known to be a cheat, and godlessness, foreseen to ruin us, are of those "close reckonings of every hasty man (that can) result only in want." "Result only in;" simply, δ. "Every;" simply, "all;" implying the endless variety of these close calculators, who are nevertheless "hasty" men.

The gains of these calculators the Wise Man next characterizes by the very intensest emblems. What is more perishable than "breath?" What could we conceive of as more so than the hot breathing of a lost wretch, whose house, burning over him, drives him into a surrounding conflagration? It is this reduplicated perishableness that the Proverb weaves into its imagination of the sinner's "wealth":—

- 6 The making of wealth by a lying tongue
is driven breath as of men chasing after
death.

6 The getting of
treasures by a lying
tongue is a vanity toss-
ed to and fro of them
that seek death.

"Wealth;" literally, *stores*, from a root to *shut up*. "*Tongue;*" standing for all instruments of labor (21:6). "*Lying;*" not telling lies in the worldly sense; for, so put, decent sinners would miss the signification: but "*lying*" in that high sense in which the most honest worldling may fill the portrait. "*Tongue;*" just coincident with feet, as of the *haste* of the last verse; that untrue uttering of thought, against conviction in one's self, and, therefore, hardly to be dreamed of as spared by the Most High. Stores, got by this lying career of business, may seem solid; because they may be whole blocks of granite in some fire-proof square-mile of street; and yet, as to their possession, the Wise Man employs the above singularly intensive figure. They are "*driven breath!*" Surely he will pause at that! But no! They are "*driven breath as of men chasing after death!*" Much has been written about these substantives. They are not in apposition (Maurer); because "*breath*" and *men in chase* are not opposite ideas. And yet they are not in construction (De Wette); i. e., one is not the genitive; for an adjective ("*driven*") interposes to imply not; nay, to make that impossible. How are we to understand it, therefore? Plainly as one of those cases where the accusative is like the Latin ablative (*Rule*, "Cause, manner, etc."); and where part of the force of the word *וְ* might be understood as supposed. There is some reason for this. To say, "*driven breath of those seeking death*" is not so full in its meaning as "*driven breath as of (or as in the instance of) those seeking, etc.*" The meaning is, that the hot breath of a man rushing to his doom, is like the money made by a deceived impenitent. First, it is utterly perishable. Second, it betokens the speed; and, third, the voluntary rush, to get himself into ruin.

The Bible loves to remind us that this is not a private matter either. It is robbery to perish, just as there is robbery in worldly fortune. Men ought not to complain, therefore, if they reap the natural results:—

7 The rapacity of the wicked snatches away
themselves;
because it was they that refused to carry
out judgment.

⁷ The robbery of the
wicked shall destroy
them; because they
refuse to do judgment.

“The unrighteous mammon,” and “that which is another man’s,” of the New Testament; and all these teachings of the Old that speak of *greedily seizing* (20:21; 28:20), *haste* (19:2), *pushing along, etc.* (20:3), agree in one picture;—that an impenitent has no right to anything; and that all that he makes (v. 6), is a robbery of God. Here we are told that this robbery *filches himself*; and there follows the point, that he has relinquished redress, because he has visibly refused the principles on which to build a “*judgment*.”

The sinner is getting no nearer, as he may imagine he is doing; but always “**further**:”—

8 The man who has been twisting about as
to his way, has also been getting fur-
ther off;
but the pure man is straight-forward in his
work.

⁸ The way of man is
foward and strange:
but as for the pure,
his work is right.

Several times we have translated *turning* as *turning further*, because that seemed to be the meaning of the Proverb, 1:32; see also 19:27 and 20:1. It is not so with actual paths. A man may *twist*, and often get nearer. It is a solemn fact that the wandering of the wicked is always outward. Fuerst and Gesenius both miss this, and do it by the help of a new word which they coin from a cognate. Such steps are always unpromising. Inside its familiar grounds the Hebrew has the verb, if we will only prefix a particle. That particle is the “*also*” which is necessary to the sense. The verb is the common one, to *turn further off*. In the noun it means a *stranger*. The sense aimed at is, that duty is but one: if we are changing “*about*,” we may know that we are wandering away: that “**the pure man**” is (*quoad hoc*) the single-minded man; for that if our eye be single, our whole body will be full of light (Matt. 6:22). “**Straightforward**,” literally, *plain, level*. This is the Hebrew image. But the English idiom constrains us differently, and

we say "*straightforward*," though it is primarily a horizontal straightness.

This crookedness is most of all unbearable in its odiousness within ourselves. Hell may be more inward than outward. The wife, that the Scriptures often use where some singular intimacy is to be discussed (see remarks, 5:18; also Eph. 5:32), is not so close a relation as we are to ourselves. It would be "**better to dwell**" in a desert (v. 19) with our crookedness away, than in heaven with our present waywardness :—

- 9 It is better to dwell upon a pinnacle of the roof,
than that there should be a brawling woman
and a house in common. 9 *It is better to dwell in a corner of the house-top, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.*

Of course, all that is secular in this Proverb it holds intact. It means all that it appears to mean. But, spiritually, it depicts ourselves. We think so,—(1) because, that the "**roof**" is a better place than the "**house**" for a deafened husband is not of moment enough for the Scriptures; and (2) because anything about "**a woman**," and her unbearableness in a house, has no link sufficient with the rest of the passage. "**Pinnacle.**" Life on a "**roof**" was common in those days; but, hardly, we take it, upon a *turret* ("*pinnacle*"). It is better, therefore, to do any impracticable thing than to endure ourselves through eternity.

Because, Notice ! the inspired man would say : Observe one trait of the sinner ! He positively **desires evil**. The only things asked of him being to desire holiness, and to love his neighbor, he does just the opposite as to both :—

- 10 The soul of a wicked man has conceived a desire for evil.
His neighbor meets no favor in his eyes. 10 *The soul of the wicked desireth evil; his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes.*

This might appear to be but one fact about the "**wicked**." On the contrary it is the whole. If one's "**soul**" proves hard to live with (v. 9), it can only be in those two respects. But, alas ! what horrid specifications ! "**Evil**;" all kinds of it. He rejoices in iniquity (1 Cor. 13:6); he rejoices in calamity

(17 : 5); he desires nothing but "*evil*" (17 : 11). Blessed be God, if a soul desires anything but "*evil*," i. e., desires it truly (see James 4 : 2), that soul is saved. As to the second clause, there may be a bending over earthly distress, but real "*favor*" to "**his neighbor**" the lost man never shows. "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel" (12 : 10). His children are to be immortal; but in those tremendous risks they meet "**no favor in his eyes.**" "**Has conceived;**" emphatic preterite. The mischief was original. The lost always have had a lust for "*evil*." It was so in the beginning. And this simple "*desire*" is at the bottom of all impenitency.

What can suit such a soul but "**punishment?**" It saves the believer; and, if it hardens the lost, it is a lesson to others in the universe:—

11 By the punishment of the scorner the simple becomes wise;
and by instruction for the wise, one receives knowledge.

11 When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise; and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.

"**Scorner.**" So grand an intellect as Solomon's might be supposed disgusted by so strong a rhetoric. And yet it is dotted all over his book. A respectful sinner; how is he a "*scorner?*" The Holy Ghost plainly intends just the shock that such words occasion. If a man hears that he should repent, and knows the reasons, and among the reasons are facts like Hell, and calls like Christ's, and scenes like death, with all the realities of an eternal judgment, is there any spoken scorn that can be thought of as more scornful than the acted scorn (no matter what the plea) of not repenting? "**The simple becomes wise;**" i. e., the subject or the witness of "*the punishment,*" just as it may happen. "**One receives knowledge;**" that is, the "*wise*" man himself, or some other. "*Punishment*" never wastes. "*The wicked [may be] thrust lower by his evil*" (14 : 32), but some saint receives the lesson. This principle reaches through the system. The philosophy of Hell is its good-doing through all the universe.

Accordingly the "*evil*," though good for "*the righteous,*" is bad for the incorrigible sinner:—

12 He who gives wisdom to the righteous man by means of the house of the wicked,
overturns the wicked by means of evil.

12 The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked: but God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness.

And the result is not merely a result, but a purpose. If God does not convert a man by "evil," He makes it curse him. The first clause has given difficulty. "**By means of the house of the wicked.**" The preposition is **בְּ**; more precisely, by *reference to*, i. e., by *pointing out*, "the house." "**House;**" *interests of all sorts.* "**The house of the wicked**" is his doom no matter where. He who improves "**the righteous**" by pointing to "**the wicked**," injures "**the wicked**" by the very same exhibition of "**evil**." This has been seen to be the case. The plague of Justinian swept one third of men! and, in a way notorious ever since, hardened the rest, and sowed broadcast superhuman iniquity. Hell sanctifies Heaven, but corrupts itself. The meaning is clear. Unwarrantable difficulty has beset the hermeneutics of the passage.

Coming back to the original question; if we suppose it to be true (v. 10), that the "*wicked desire evil*," and that their "*neighbor meets no favor in [their] eyes*," can they complain intelligently if like treatment is meted back to them from the Almighty?—

13 He who shuts his ear from the cry of the weak;
even, because so doing, shall himself also call, and shall not be answered.

13 Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.

"**Weak**;" usually "**poor**," (E. V.), but like many another case in Hebrew (e. g., *fool*), a single English is made to render several Hebrew expressions. One word, "**poor**," means a man *deserted* or *without*. Another means "**weak**," and we have so presented it here. To a Hebrew eye it always so presented itself. The prior meaning has, *ad hoc*, a primary claim. "**Even because so doing also.**" The whole of that is the translation of two words, נִגְנֵן בָּה (even he). The pronoun, being expressed and emphatic, might usually be translated *himself*; but not always. *As such* is the frequent idea (Class X.). The man, guilty of a

certain course, not because of his perdition generally, but of that specific guilt, “**because so doing,**” shall have a certain return of evil.

Calls “**of the weak,**” instead of being a curse, if listened to, become a specific blessing; and warm towards us the Heavenly King, because they were applications from Himself for “**a gift**” and “**a present**” :—

14 A gift in secret tames anger;
and a present in the bosom, strong wrath. | 14 A gift in secret
pacifieth anger; and a
reward in the bosom
strong wrath.

If any one would bribe God let him try it “*in secret*” upon “one of these little ones” (Matt. 10: 42). The least of them (Matt. 25: 40) stands for the Great Present Taker. Do we want pardon? we are to believe. Would we believe? we are to obey. Are we to obey? Stripping ourselves for the naked (Matt. 5: 40), and starving ourselves for the hungry (Matt. 25: 35), if done for a proper motive, is the best “*gift in secret, and a present in the bosom*” for taming “*wrath*.” This is dangerous doctrine. A man cannot buy his way to Heaven. Yet, in a certain way, he can; and, in some sort of sense, he must. The “body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.” Religion in the body is a most practical work. Obedience requires food and muscle. *Following*, with the young ruler, was money (Matt. 19: 21). So of conversion. Often a bold free act may be the one that conquers; and afterwards, “pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father [will be] to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep [ourselves] unspotted from the world” (Jas. 1: 27). With an exegesis that objects to these spiritual explications here would be a good moment to insist upon some different attempt. We can carry the war into Africa; and, remembering that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” demand, what “profitable for doctrine or reproof” can be dreamed of as residing in the mere secular declaration.

Taming God, which seems the thought *ad hominem*, therefore, residing in the fourteenth verse, is urged in the fifteenth by the idea, that the “*judgment*” of God appears differently before and afterward. Before He is appeased, His “*judgment*” seems

bitter "**ruin**." After He is appeased, it is "**joy to the righteous**" man :—

- 15 The execution of judgment is joy to the righteous,
but ruin to workers of iniquity.

15 It is joy to the just to do judgment; but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.

"*Judgment*;" not the saint's "*judgment*:" that is "*joy*" of course: but, all "*judgment!*" even the "*judgment*" of the lost! Sad doctrine that! and to man's feeling, a very shameful one. But to man's reason, there may be a glimpse of light. The highest "*joy*" is to be holiness: the highest holiness, the holiness of God. All "*judgment*" is built upon that. God's holiness, therefore, being the basis on which He condemns the lost, in that "*judgment*," which is part of the trait, may be part of the "*joy*" that springs to the glorified believer. "*Shall be*" (E. V.). Whenever Italics are in the print there may be doubt whether the meaning will be given. (See, for just such Italics and sad dislocation of the thought, second clause, E. V. 10: 29).

"*Judgment*" in the instance of the lost is simply *death*. That includes everything of penalty (Gen. 2: 17). So Paul announces it. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6: 23). Pain, therefore; so much of it for so much sin, is a part of the penalty. Part of it also is sin itself. This last is the obstinate element; the first might be lived out (see 19: 19). Sin for sin, that is the terror! So much of it for so much more; and so much more for so much: that is what makes the doom of "**wandering from the way**" remediless. Thus the next text asserts. Something that can "**condemn sin**" (Rom. 8: 3) will stop the virus of outspreading iniquity; but otherwise :—

- 16 Man wandering from the way of growing wise
shall abide in the assemblage of the shades.

16 The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead.

And how horrible! "**Shades**;" *departed spirits*. The heathen had called them "*shades*," because they dreamed of them as in a shadowy life. Poetically they became emblems of the *lost*, as *Death* did of our *loss*, and *Sheol*, of our *lost condition*.

"**Man**," "*wandering*" in Adam, joined, at that early day, "**the assemblage of the shades**," and "**shall abide**" in it but for the grace of the Redeemer.

One reason is, that souls have parted with any higher motive than "**happiness**." This is the cause of the many hypocritical conversions. Sinners melted by fear, or sinners converted by hope, or sinners moved by a desire, may be disciplined into goodness of that outward sort that resembles disciplined manners; but if it be only a desire for "*happiness*," that is not piety. Men cannot be pious till they hate sin, and have a love for holiness. For though helped mightily by fear, and moved to amazing effort by desires after immortality; and though the Bible may use threats, and the law may shake its terrors, yet, in the last result, selfishness cannot beget a saint:—

17 A poor man loving happiness,
loving wine and oil, does not create wealth. ¹⁷ He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man; he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.

He may secularly. For here is a Proverb that on earth has but a partial verity. But now, spiritually, it is as settled as the heavens. "*He that loveth his soul shall lose it*" (Jo. 12: 25). A man cannot scale heaven for its "**wine**." Unless a man gets higher objects than himself, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. And, therefore, it is literally true, that the "**wealth**" that the soul attains is never made by the very most feverish desire to escape, or by the very most impassioned thirst of the mere "*joy*" of heaven. "**Man**"; the higher name for man. He may be ever so skilful. "**Create wealth**;" Hiphil of verb *to be rich*. The fact is, true "**wealth**" is a love of holiness. It cannot be *created* by selfish desires. "*The law*" may be "*our schoolmaster*;" but as it scares us in, something higher must perform the work. Religion may be as *happy* as the lark; but it is a "**happiness**," like the shadow of a rock, that falls behind it under the light of the Almighty. "**Loving**;" not, if it loves, but, because it loves. It is no harm to *love "happiness"* ; but it cannot be in loving it, or because we love it, that we can "*create*" everlasting riches.

The Wise Man, however, does not desist from employing

motives of gain and pleasure, even though they are not the things to put us within the kingdom. He states them for their auxiliary effect. In the 19th verse he presses the fact that it would be better to have no oil or wine and live "in a desert land," than to be shut up eternally with ourselves. In the 20th verse he says, however, that the righteous need fear no such privation; that "**treasure and oil**" shall be their characteristic possession; because (21st verse) "**righteousness**" shall win pleasure. This will be its unfailing result. The doctrine is, that, while a desire for happiness is not the power that can drag a man into grace, yet grace is a power that can lift a man into happiness. The logic of the two efficiencies must be precisely reversed. A man must get higher than self to attain unto piety, but he cannot go higher than piety to accumulate for self. "**A poor man loving happiness, loving wine and oil does not create wealth**"; but "**treasure and oil are in the lodging place of the wise man**," and "**he who pursues righteousness and kindness shall find life, righteousness and glory.**" These are the Proverbs which we must now take up. But first of all there comes one of those terrible sentences, occasional in both Testaments; bewilderingly sad; hopeless when we begin to cavil; taught by the Apostle Paul; but confessed by Peter to be "hard to be understood;" and, perhaps, themselves alluded to when he speaks of those "other Scriptures" which men "wrest unto their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:16):—

- 18 A cover for the righteous man is the wicked | 18 The wicked shall
man; be a ransom for the
and in the place of the upright shall be the right.
faithless.

This is literally true. If Saul and Judas had not served for "an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7), then Paul and Peter, where might they not have been? This is terrible doctrine. Those niches were to be filled in the all-manifesting universe. Each man that stood in one seems "**a cover**" for a saint. And whoever, "to explain the wrath and to make what was possible for (God) known" (Rom. 9:22) died the death, picked up a lot that might have been left for some be-

iever! How tender this should make us! and how bitterly offensive to God!—the soul's arrogance as against the abandoned! “Who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as though thou hadst not received it?” (1 Cor. 4: 7). The text is inclusive of minor services of the perishing; God gives men for us, and people for our life (Is. 43: 4). But, alas! the great one is enough. Judas, and even Satan, stepped in, like Curtius, to fill a gulf; and some armed horseman was to fill it. “*Cover* ;” often *ransom*; the favorite word for representing the propitiation of a Redeemer.

The brawling “woman” comes in rather inopportune next; at least so comments of men like Hitzig would represent; and it would seem almost a luxury to say, as he no doubt would do, that the copyist made some mistake:—

19 Better is life in a desert land,
than a contentious and fretful woman.

^{19. It is better to}
dwell in the wilderness,
than with a contentious
and an angry woman.

But the inspired man is turning over impenitence in all lights, and this is one of them. He had said (v. 17) that selfishness could not reach heaven. As that is our most practical motive, (when we are dying, for example, and when we trust to our sheer terror to push us in to the desired refuge,) it is, indeed, a terrible announcement that nothing like this can save a man. It gives the writer a pause to say (v. 18), what a mercy any poor soul is delivered. He is about to declare, that, though selfishness cannot procure piety, piety can procure all the objects of selfishness (vs. 20, 21). He stops, however, to urge, that, if it could not, it would be *better to dwell in a desert*, than with the single torment of our own corruptions. We understand the Proverb to say, that if Hell had nothing but the “fretful” wife, that is our ungodly selves, and heaven had nothing but “a *desert land*,” it would be “*better*” to do without “*corn and wine*,” even if Hell were a palace, than to endure the torture of our own **contentions**. And mark, in the doubled case (vs. 9, 19) the verb to *dwell* is not repeated. Some men insist that it should be (see Zöckler). They would read,—“Better to dwell in a desert than [*to dwell*] with a contentious woman.” But when

the Holy Ghost holds the pen, we would stickle for everything. We believe the omission was intended. The hot scold herself is miserable. The “*desert land*” is better than the “*woman*” herself, in (1) herself, or in (2) her relations. The lost soul is horrid in every respect; in itself; in its companions; in its own mad heats; in its strife with other souls. And, therefore, the Wise Man appears to preface his texts on the “*wine*” of heaven by saying, that if there were none, it would be better to dwell in “*a desert land*” than in the midst of these abominable corruptions.

Joy to us! however; piety is no desert:—

- 20 Treasure to be desired, and oil, are in the ^{20 There is treasure} lodging-place of the wise man; ^{to be desired, and oil} but a fool of a man devours himself. ^{in the dwelling of the wise: but a foolish man spendeth it up.}

“Treasure;” literally, “*stores*.” “To be desired;” literally, “*desired*;” passive (Niphal) participle of the verb to *desire*. “Lodging-place.” It need not be a palace. The root means to *rest*, to *sit*. It may be a mere *shieling*, or the Arbor by the Hill Difficulty. The second clause advances on the thought. While piety makes “*wine*” and “*oil*,” impenitence does the contrary. It not only does not make “*wine and oil*,” but, with a climax characteristic of the book, it “**devours**” up its very “*self*.” The “*wine and oil*” are of course significant of what is happy, and the devouring of one’s very “*self*” means the swallowing of all the interests of his being. The sinner, instead of making wealth, makes nothing; and, instead of keeping the wealth he has, “**devours**” even “*himself*.”

So then a man cannot get piety by selfishness, but he can, as the next Proverb helps to declare, splendidly aid self by piety:—

- 21 He who pursues righteousness and kindness, ^{21 He that followeth after righteousness and mercy, findeth life, righteousness, and honour.} shall find life, righteousness, and glory.

“Pursues;” primarily, *follows after, chases eagerly*. How absorbed the chase of some poor partridge on the hills. Even let that be our picture. “Righteousness and kindness;” the two tables of the law; a geminal picture of *all* holiness. Now

let a man chase holiness with the absorbed forgetfulness of self that such game would imply, and all else will come in at the death. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things else will be added thereto (Matt. 6:33). “**Life**;” all sorts of *life*. “**Righteousness**;” but one sort of “*righteousness*,” namely that personal “*righteousness*” which (see the first clause) is both means and end. “**Glory**;” all sorts of “*glory*.” The list is not an illogical one. “**Life**;” all that is personally good and happy: “*righteousness*;” all that in life is best and happiest: “*glory*;” that which is above happiness, and is always to be counted higher; viz., the honor and excellency of absolute purity of being.

An interval occurs here (see 18:1), marking, however, no noticeable rupture of the sense. On the contrary, the difficulty mentioned in the 17th verse, that men cannot get heaven for its happiness, is met by the statement, that getting heaven at all is a rugged and momentous victory:—

22 A wise man has scaled the city of the mighty,
and is bringing down the strength of its place of confidence.

22 A wise man scal-
eth the city of the
mighty, and casteth
down the strength of
the confidence thereof.

“**Has scaled**,” emphatic preterite (see 22:3; 24:27). There was a dash at the first that signified conversion, and that must be a thing of the past. But the “**bringing down**” was to go on afterward. Such was what was typical in the history. The Israelites never crushed the Philistines. The Jebusites long dwelt in Jerusalem’s stronghold (Joshua 15:63). The sinner in his very feeblest state enters Canaan, and *scales* “**the city of the mighty**.” But when his foot has touched that eternal tramping ground, alas for him! there is still the *citadel*! “**A wise man**,” not only as being “*a wise man*,” but in becoming “*a wise man, has scaled the city of the mighty*,” and evermore afterward, in becoming wiser, he is “*bringing down the strength of its place of confidence*.” “**Place**,” not a separate word, but a meaning we have always a right to inquire after, where the **נ** precedes this sort of derivative (4:23).

Not to print mistake upon his emblems, Solomon qualifies

the last by those that immediately follow. Conversion is not a warfare. It is not the glow of camps or the shout of armed men, but a drowsy and forlorn awakening. Arrayed against it may be the “*strength*” of the “*mighty*” (v. 22); but it is a strength absurd and miserable, as against a droning and depressing inanition. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood;” and, when we come to understand the venture, the climb over the gates is not a bound of strength, but a torpid crawl out of mortal infirmity of feeling. Hence the patient prosing of the Preacher as he next approaches us:—

- 23 He that guards his mouth and his tongue, | ²³ Whoso keepeth
guards his soul from troubles. | his mouth and his
tongue, keepeth his
soul from troubles.

Christian obedience is the way to triumph. Of course it is not a very lively way. The obedience must be, first, in faith. Faith itself is but a dull, cold beginning. Faith afterward is a daily patience. The “*mouth*” and the “*tongue*” are the instruments of that (15 : 4). As with a watchman who “*guards*” the night, the great enemy of the soul is drowsiness. And, though faith is most brilliant in the end, for it “*guards [the] soul from troubles*;” yet it is most dull in its beginning, and most sad and plodding through all its history.

On the contrary, the Wise Man seems to be reminded that there has been thought to be a brilliancy on the other side. He has already spoken of the “*headlong*” character of impenitence (20 : 3); how it acts without thought (15 : 28), and how generously it risks on future promises (27 : 1). Again, therefore, he unites, in the most vivid picture, everything like that:—

- 24 Proud, haughty, scornful, is his name, | ²⁴ Proud and
who acts with the headlong gait of pride. | haughty scorner is his
name who dealeth in
proud wrath.

In the course of different Proverbs this Teacher will be found to have explained all his own use of terms. Piety as “*wisdom*” and wickedness as “*folly*,” terms very characteristic of his books, he explains in this book at the very first. “*Scorner*” is his favorite name for the impenitent. We were giving reasons for this under the eleventh verse. But had we waited he would

have given them himself. No one can deny this marked characteristic,—of *precipitance*. It is the marvel even of the lost. Hell has been preached for centuries. Heaven has been painted every Sabbath day. Yet, though men know what is for the best, they act directly for the opposite. This is the burden of Solomon in unnumbered of his Proverbs. He calls it *hasty* (19 : 2). He calls it *greedy* (20 : 21). He calls it *pouring themselves along* (20 : 3). Here he calls it *precipitancy*, or, as we translate it, a “*head-long gait*.” He remembers that this is the gait of the “*proud*” even in worldly estates. They push along, and do not choose to care. He characterizes it, therefore, in that way additionally, and says, that he “**who acts with the headlong gait of pride**” has chosen it not in any practical mistake. He is “*proud*;” he is “*haughty*;” he is “*scornful*;” and, that, as *his [very] name* (see 22 : 10). That is, the demurest sinner, who seems thoroughly respectful to the truth, would not *push along* so into the very jaws of death, if he were not arrogantly trusting to himself, and if he felt not scornfully free from the necessities of the gospel. This is the idea, therefore. The lost have the “*gait*” of the “*proud*” man in being so “*head-long*.” The true solution is, They *are* proud. The meekest sinner is at heart a “*scorner*” of his immediate needs of this blessed salvation.

Not that he has no longings for it:—

25 The desire of the sluggard kills him ; because his hands have refused to give it execution. 25 The desire of the slothful killeth him ; for his hands refuse to labour.

This is the meaning of that peculiar text that has been translated, “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick” (E. V. 13 : 12). We had a long essay upon it. We translated it, “Protracted delay weakens the heart.” We call in this text to confirm it. There can be no doubt about the principle. “**The desire of the sluggard**,” which is itself an interesting idea, it has hardly spoken of before it disposes of it in an apt philosophical assertion. “*The desire of the sluggard*” means his wish to be a Christian (13 : 4). All men have that wish. It is the one thing they say of themselves with the most heartfelt decision.

Now, instead of being a blessing, the inspired man has told us before (13 : 12) that this wish ungratified becomes an instrument of death. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick" was the ordinary version, but we discussed the sentence, and translated it,—"Protracted delay weakens the heart." The philosophy is this:—"Desire" to be a Christian is what is left of our spiritual wreck. Gratified, it will bring us ashore. Delayed, it will help to founder us. These are the points at which Satan gets at the heart to destroy what is left. Laid asleep, we would remain the same. Acting, we perish. These remaining *desires* are the sparks which the Spirit might kindle. Alive, and yet smothered, they soon die out. The only way to kindle them is to obey them. This, therefore, is the philosophy of our text. "*The desire of the sluggard kills him.*" Why? Because he will not gratify it. The way to gratify it is to get it accomplished. This is the very thing he will not consent to do. "*The desire of the sluggard kills him, because his hands have refused to give it execution:*" literally, "*have refused to do.*" Say not, It is the *refusal* that kills, and not "*the desire.*" That is not altogether the case. The spark that is too weak to grow puts itself out by its attempts. The "*desire*" that is too dull to act has treasured in it the last remainders of the heart; and, in its languid throbs, makes itself the instrument of its own growing dissolution.

Confounding "*desire*," when we think of it as a hopeful test, we forget how hungry a thing it is. What does it do for anybody? or what does it give? Why should we think that a desire must bring us nearer to heaven, when it is, first, not a spiritual desire, and secondly, when it is shamed by "*the righteous*," who both desires and bestows. This is the next attack upon the post of the impenitent:—

26 He creates himself a longing all the day; | 26 He coveteth
while the righteous gives, and spares not. | greedily all the day
long; but the righteous
giveth, and spareth not.

"*Longs a longing;*" or "*makes himself long a longing.*" It is the Hithpahel. How long a "*day*" that is! when it may be eighty years! What an insanity it is to desire a thing so long,

and never get it, when that thing is eternal life! and the “*desire*” itself is slowly pushing it away! (v. 25). “*The righteous gives.*” This is the same righteous man that did not get piety by merely providing for self (v. 17); who nevertheless provided for self most bountifully when he got piety (v. 20); and who now (v. 26), when he has got piety, is not engaged preeminently for self, but “*gives and spares not.*”

Because of the opposite of this, viz., that it is nothing but selfishness, the religion of the impenitent man is “*an abomination*” to Jehovah:—

- 27 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination;²⁷ | the wicked is abomination: how much more,
because, also, he brings it for a calculated | when he bringeth it
purpose. with a wicked mind?

This is a New Testament idea:—“Ye ask and receive not,” saith the Apostle James, “because ye ask amiss.” How? Why, precisely in the way that the Proverb points out, because ye do it for an interested purpose: as the Apostle expresses it, “that ye may consume it in your desires.” The wicked man asks for heaven that he may “consume it” in keeping comfortable through a long eternity. The Proverb (v. 17) postulates the opposite. *In merely loving happiness, a man cannot create wealth.* The mass of hypocrites, therefore, are these eternal-happiness-hypocrites. They have schooled themselves to seem religious under the immense incentive of “*wine and oil*” (v. 17). “**Because also.**” The “*how much more*” of the English Version has been already commented on (see also Class XLIV). The “*because also*” expresses this:—that there may be other reasons, but that additional and fundamental among them all is this deepest one, that religious acts cannot be accepted, if they are built upon nothing tenderer than “*a calculated purpose.*” “Ye seek me,” says our Blessed Redeemer, “not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled” (John 6: 26). “*Calculated purpose;*” the word used chap. 24: 9 (which see). The word oftenest means *iniquity*.

Next comes a sort of stock Proverb, as a play actor would

say, like those about parents, or like those about a scolding wife, or about false balances, which are held in reserve, and repeated often in varied language when the occasion supervenes. This may be called one of the *Every-Man-a-Witness* Proverbs (14:5, 25; 12:17). A man cannot prevent his character as a witness-bearing creature in the universe. God cannot bear witness in Himself; for He is invisible. He bears a vital witness by every sinner. The fitness of this place for one of these *Witness-Proverbs* is this:—that the inspired Solomon would imply that a mere “*calculated purpose*” is not religion; neither, therefore, is it any religious example; neither, then, is the man that counts it so, a true “*witness*.” And, therefore, the dropping, just here, of one of the *Witness-Proverbs* is very timely:—

28 A deceived witness perishes;
but a man that hearkens speaks forever.

28 A false witness shall perish; but the man that heareth speaketh constantly.

There is something very complete in this. The reply:—No! He may be saved; brings out most neatly the compass of this special text. “*The deceived witness perishes*.” He may do that in either of two ways; either, first, in the pit, where the seductions of his falsehoods can do no more any mischief; or second, by the cross. The “*old man*” can perish. The “*witness of lies*” (as it primarily means) can be put out of the way. And the great advance in the idea which Solomon usually aims for in the second clause (19:11) comes in to give edge to this sharp cut significance. “*A deceived witness perishes*;” but he does not say,—A true witness does not: rather, he goes altogether deeper. He remembers that men are deceived witnesses because they will not think; that “*counsel*,” as he has already expressed it (20:5), lies in all of us; that pushing on (20:3) and being hasty (19:2) is the fault of the impenitent. And, therefore, instead of the true witness, his portrait is, “**a man that hearkens**;” and, instead of saying that he shall not perish, he brings out that beautiful idea that his witnessing here is but the earnest of a long testimony hereafter. The “*deceived witness perishes*;” that is, whether a Christian or not, his life as a deceived witness shall come utterly to an end; while he who

"hearkens," *letting down the bucket*, as was formerly expressed (20:5), for the *deep waters*, viz., the "counsels" of his heart, begins to witness truth, and continues to witness truth, and shall continue eternally to witness it through the ages of the blessed. As "*a deceived witness*," then, converted or unconverted, he shall be sure to perish; as "*a man that hearkens*," he shall cease to be deceived, and learn the truth, and speak it, and "**speak forever.**"

The evil of this deceived witnessing is emphatically told as follows:—

- 29 One has been confirming a wicked man by |<sup>29 A wicked man
hardeneth his face;
but as for the upright,
he directeth his way.</sup>
his mere countenance;
but the level walker, as such, beats firm his
way.

Notice the intenseness of all this! A man need not even utter his impenitence. His very looks spread it. There is an electric power in influence that it emphasizes with the past tense (14:1). A look has *already* done the mischief; "talking with his eyes; speaking with his feet; motioning with his fingers" (6:13). Most elaborate pictures occur twice of these destructive pantomimes (6:13; 16:27-30). On the contrary, "**the level walker**" (*literally "the level"*), not so much in the easy way of a glance, but in the labored way of a life, is a path-builder. Every good man through life is building a highway to assist the feet of other poor refuge-taking transgressors. "*Upright*" (E. V.); literally, "*level*." His even tread "*beats*" a path, which other poor sinners find established. "**As such;**" simply the emphatic pronoun. "*As such;*" that is, as "*level*." The "*level walker*," as *level*, "*beats*" the path, and thus establishes it for the feet of others. "**One.**" The verb may either be impersonal, or the noun "**man**" may belong to this part of the sentence. "**One has been confirming a wicked man**," or "**a man has been confirming the wicked;**" either will suit the grammar, and both will suit the sense; and, therefore, as in many another passage, there has been no care against such an instance of indifference (16:7).

Man's not being able to win heaven by selfishness (v. 17) leaves still the lurking thought that he will some way snatch it

at the last. His work to this end may be an “abomination” (v. 27); and it may be a wild notion that he can “make the evil good” (20:22): still he has the thought that he will one day win the game. Solomon sweeps all such thoughts away:—

- 30 There is no wisdom, and there is no discernment,
and there is no counsel, against Jehovah. | 30 *There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel, against the Lord.*

It would be a strong sentence if he declared that calculating against God never could amount to anything. He has taken here his favorite words, which in other Proverbs mean piety. It would be a stout truth if he said, that, enlisted on the side of sin, they could not put heaven in pawn, and hold by a species of chicane both worlds safe by temporizing promises. But he does something more clear than that. “*There is no [such thing as] wisdom; there is no [such thing as] discernment,*” or “counsel” enlisted “against” the Most High. They could do nothing if there were; but “*wisdom*” never could be enticed to that side. The sentence embodies both ideas. There is no wisdom that could avail against God; but, secondly, there is none that would ever attempt it. The expressions are peculiar. “*There is nothing of wisdom.*” The word is repeated, “*Nothing,*” “*Nothing,*” “*Nothing.*” No possible form of shrewdness can shape a course that would justify one hour’s delay in seeking salvation. And, to make the thing more emphatic, a Proverb follows (with a sense strangely overlooked), —that “*salvation*” itself is the only provision we can make “against” the Most High:—

- 31 A horse is made ready against a day of battle;
and salvation against Jehovah. | 31 *The horse is prepared against the day of battle; but safety is of the Lord.*

It may be for forty years hence; but the king makes his muskets now. Heavy armaments are gotten ready, and kept. It is a hard thing to keep them from the rust; and the “*horse*” may grow old and die. Still, in dead peace, when not a trumpet blares, all these things must be ready. And so of judgment. Armories that “*salvation*” can be gotten ready in; and promises

that it certainly shall be ready, and that in time, are all folly. “*Wisdom*” never helps on that side (v. 30). What the “*horse*” is in time of peace, “*salvation*” is in the period of the most profound impenitency. “*Against*;” ָ; the same word in both clauses. To translate in the first clause, “*against*,” and in the last clause, “*of*” (E. V.) or “*from*” (Zöckler), is a strange oversight. “**Made ready;**” literally, *fixed, made to stand*. “*Salvation*” may seem a weak thing on earth, but, laid aside like the muniments of a prince, it will be everything in the day of “**Jehovah.**”

CHAPTER XXII.

The “*salvation*” that is “*made ready against*” the day of God (21:31) is neatly expressed in the next verse (v. 1) by the word “*name*.” What we want at the day of judgment is a “*name*.” A “*name*” means a being’s known character. God’s “*name*” is His visible perfections. The “*name*” of Gabriel, that stands him in stead in the judgment, is his perfect holiness. And the “*name*” of the saints is Christ’s “*name*.” See chap. 18:10. “The name of Jehovah is a tower of strength; the righteous runs into it and is lifted high.” Just as Aladdin’s lamp was worth more than the riches that it brought; so the “*name*” of Christ, in which the lost may stand forgiven, is worth more than all the riches it can possibly procure:—

¹ A name is to be chosen rather than great wealth. Grace is better than silver or than gold.

A *GOOD* name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.

Hebrew construction alone would not free this verse from ambiguity. The first line in Gray’s Elegy is scarcely more capable of transposition than this is of different orders and sense. It may read,—“*A chosen name is better than great wealth.*” Then it would mean not “*name*” in the sense of standing, but “*name*” in the sense of designation. It would mean, therefore, the fact of a divine election. *Being chosen by God is better than great wealth; and “grace than silver or than*

gold." This would make a very complete and timely meaning, and would agree well with what precedes and follows. "**Is to be chosen**," on the contrary, may not only be retained in the first clause, but carried to the second. "**Better**" (2d clause), which is expressed in the usual way (see Ec. 7:1), would then drop its meaning of comparison, and agree with grace. *A name is to be chosen rather than great wealth; and good grace than silver or than gold.* It is wonderful that the order of nouns and adjectives does not fix the sense; but it does not do so inviolably. All things considered, it seems best to give each clause a comparative; and certainly the last expression, of *good grace*, or *good favor*, is so lustreless in its addition to the sense, that, without some precedent of usage (which it has not), it seems obvious that we should turn against it. "A horse is made ready against a day of battle, and salvation against Jehovah." "*Salvation*," therefore, is a great life exigence. Its nature is a "*name*," i. e., a court-standing which we can possess at the last. That will win everything. "A name, [therefore], is to be chosen rather than great wealth." And as, in the instance of the sinner, it is not his own "*name*," but his Redeemer's, the corresponding word is "*grace*." It is a different thing with Gabriel; but with the sinner it is all of "*grace*." Hence, therefore, the particular handling of the second clause.

If it be of "*grace*," though, why is it not given to all? Plainly because of some administrative reasons:—

- 2** The rich man and poor man are fitted together,
Jehovah making all of them.

2 The rich and poor
meet together; the
Lord is the maker of
them all.

In our temporal state, "**the rich and [the] poor**" fit in a system. There is a necessity for both. God, therefore, has created both. But these mere Malthus facts are not the burden of the Proverb. Solomon is thinking of the spiritually "*rich*." The first verse prepared for that. The fourth verse confirms it. The earliest Proverbs call the saints "*rich*" (10:4, 22). Solomon, like Paul (Rom. 9:21-23), struggles with a hard truth. The saint and sinner fit "*together*" in God's plan. He **made both of them**. This, instead of relieving the risk, makes

it more fearful. Our doom is built in to the very timbers of the universe. A "name," therefore (v. 2),—what a prize! In this great prevailing scheme "grace" actually made certain to myself! What an amazing treasure!

And yet it is one that I can have. The Bible always rolls back to the counterpart idea :—

- 3 The subtle has seen the evil, and is covering it;
 but the simple have rushed on, and been punished.
- 3 A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.

"**The subtle.**" Like *the wise*, or *the discerning*, this is but one of the names for the *pious*. Still, each one keeps discrepant its own separate significance. "*The subtle*" has an element of *cunning*. "Now the serpent was more subtle, etc." How inexpressibly *cunning* the man that *covers up* damnation! "*Hideth himself*" (E. V.). This is hardly admissible. A *various reading*, that corresponds, may have come from a bare fancying of such a sense. The *textus receptus* is simply—and *will hide*; and, according to the usual future, may read as a continuous present. "*Is covering it.*" That is, "*is covering' the evil;*" a most evangelical account. "*Have seen;*" the emphatic perfect (22:3; 24:27). "*Have rushed on and been punished.*" Again, the perfect. *Have done* this at any given period. At any point in their lives "*the simple*" have left behind them this mistake, and are feeling its judicial consequences. "*Rushed on;*" usually *passed* (E. V.). The idea is that of soldiers charging up, or of billows rolling in. *Passing* is not necessarily present in the thought. On the contrary, *reckless precipitance* is the image here, as well as in other of the texts of Solomon (18:1; 20:3). The whole speaks of that *cunning man*, who, in that there are lost as well as saved, takes care to be saved; and, in that the lost and the saved fit together (v. 2), and are bent to some grand result, chooses to reap that result, he and the Almighty, and not to be on the side of those who "are set forth for an ensample, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7).

A sacrifice of the world, therefore, in what may be called

entire and very painful "**humiliation**," is a good bargain in the end; not only because "*grace is better*" than "*wealth*"; but because it is "*wealth*," and that of the very highest kind:—

- 4 The end of a **humiliation** which is the fear |
of Jehovah |
is wealth and honor and life. |
4 By humility, and
the fear of the LORD,
are riches, and honour,
and life.

"**Fear**;" in apposition with "*humiliation*." Notice this very particularly; for there is a species of "*humiliation*" (see next verse), which is anything but "*wealth*." "*Humiliation*;" primarily, *labor*; then *pain*; finally, *humidity*. We choose "*humiliation*" as embodying both thoughts, both pain and its fruits. These fruits must be holy; that is, the "*humiliation*" must be "*the fear of Jehovah*." Then it becomes "*wealth, and honor, and life*." Chap. 21:21 has it "*life, righteousness and glory*." The list is the same; except that "*wealth*" is replaced by "*righteousness*." Of course, it may be (see v. 1). "*A name*" breeds "*wealth*." "*A name*" restores us to "*righteousness*." "*Righteousness*," therefore, is convertible for "*wealth*." Nay, righteousness is better than "*wealth*;" as God Himself, the bestower of all, is better than any conceivable treasure. "*Wealth*," then, is everlasting good; "*honor*," everlasting glory; "*life*," all heights of living. So, painful as may be the intended "*humiliation*;" yet, if it grow into "*the fear of Jehovah*," it is in its own nature the means and earnest of all these highest possessions.

It must be "*the fear of Jehovah*," however; because:—

- 5 Thorns are snares in the way of the crooked |
man. |
He that guards his soul shall get far from |
them. |
5 Thorns and snares
are in the way of the
froward; he that doth
keep his soul shall be
far from them.

"**Thorns**;" i. e., bitter vexations. "**Are snares**;" i. e., may destroy a "*soul*," instead of saving it. Most men, near the meridian of life, have left off being seduced by pleasures, and are *ensnared* by "*thorns*." This fact has a separate department in the parable of the sower (Mark 4:19), where an actual list is given:—"The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of

riches, and the lusts of other things." The man who thinks that "*humiliation*" will save him is deceived. The most direful humiliations are only "*snares*." It is the cunning man of the third verse; he who covers up sin; that is, who brings over it the covering of a better "*name*" (v. 1); and who, as this second clause has it, "*guards his soul*," and *gets far from "thorns,"* when they are becoming "*snares*," that achieves that penitent humility which the fourth verse sets its mark upon as "*the fear of Jehovah*." "*Gets far.*" This is graphic. Not, *clears them away*. The favorite impulse of the "*soul*" is to get rid of the "*thorns*"; and then come to the feet of Jesus. No mortal ever did it. As well might a bird get rid of a snare by snapping it down upon himself. Converts, in all ages, have come to Christ by dropping their cares, and *getting far away from them*. "*The woman left her water-pot*" (Jo. 4: 28); a thing which, in her whole previous life, she could hardly have ever dreamed.

Nevertheless "*thorns*" may save a man; and particularly, as encountered in youth:—

6 Hedge in a child upon the mouth of his way: even for the very reason that he grows old | 6 Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

he shall not depart from it.

"**Hedge in a child;**" literally, *make it narrow for a child; straiten him in.* "**Upon the mouth of his way;**" that is, its *entrance*. As a young "*child*" makes many starts, so be ready for him whenever he attempts to move. This is a graphic picture. "*Hedge*" the child by driving him off of dangerous paths till nothing is left for him but the right one. Watch men as they are driving cattle. They *narrow them in* from ground where they do not want them,—in upon the gate's mouth, or the road's mouth, or the pen's mouth, wherever they intend that they shall go. This is the use of "*thorns*" (v. 5). God would not plant "*thorns*" simply as a "*snares*"; but their purpose is to drive men from danger. If "*snares*," it can only be from the perverseness of our nature: if goads, only at last through the influences of God's Holy Spirit. This Spirit we are to expect. For, now, lest there should seem endlessness in the

task, because "he grows old" a fixed promise comes in to our relief. It is a maxim, even morally, that what we fix by the discipline of youth hardens by the settlement of age. We *head* the bullock some scores of times, and at last he yields and goes quietly on. Never is this stable, however; that is, as an absolute consequence, till we get into the region of religion. There it is perfect. Treat a boy prayerfully in the period of youth, and he may cross continents. God will follow him. This is a fixed promise. "*Hedge in a child upon the mouth of his way,*" piously, lovingly, and with prayer, and he shall be saved. Such is the covenant. "**For the very reason that he grows old;**" not "*when*" (E. V.) That shrouds a much more emphatic meaning. "**Shall not depart.**" True, very imperfectly, as a secular maxim; but perfectly in the kingdom of grace. "*Hedge in*" an apprentice upon his trade, or "*hedge*" a student upon his books, or "*hedge*" a child upon the paths of virtue, and "*even for the very reason that he grows old*" he will, in great part, harden into what you want. Yet, alas! not always. But hedge in a soul upon Christ; remembering your vows for him in baptism, and being early to undertake the work: "*hedge in*" your child with prayer upon the offer of the gospel, and, then, dismiss all doubt. God shared in the baptismal sacrament. That child is as safe as his father. (I mean safe if the father has *hedged him in*.) All promises are absolute; and, therefore, this Proverb, instead of being sure only in secular affairs, is only sure as to the child's salvation.

That fearful Proverb that "*the rich and poor are fitted together*" is now returned to for the sake of telling the object. They are "*fitted*" together for a one-sided and most affecting system of results:—

- 7 The rich man rules over the poor; | 7 The rich ruleth
and the borrower is servant to the man | over the poor, and the
that lends. | borrower is servant to
the lender.

The lost are *accursed*: (Gal. 3:13) the meaning of which is, that they are *devoted*, and devoted outside of themselves. The ransomed are Kings (Rev. 1:6), the meaning of which is, not that they bear rule, (at least, not necessarily), but that all things

minister to them. The lost will minister to the saved, not personally, but in the results of their eternal history. And “**the borrower**” (a relation in which all the lost stand to the church and to the Redeemer); the men who have traded on that which was “another man’s” (Luke 16:12); the Sodoms who have lived upon the ten righteous men (Gen. 18:32); the worldlings, who have enjoyed the world as it has been purchased for them by Christ, will all be obliged to pay back. The true proprietors of earth are saints (Ps. 37:29). All else are obliged to borrow. And all who live by borrowing are sold as slaves. The Proverb is true, of course, in its secular shape; but we need hardly mention that. The other verses about wealth (1, 2, 4) plainly imply the spiritual as the more important meaning. “**The rich man;**” made singular, because the rich are few. “**Poor;**” made plural for the obverse reason. “**Rules;**” a fine illustration of what is meant by Christians being Kings. They are not to govern, (I mean, not necessarily), but to have all things working for them (Rom. 8:28). If we are Christ’s, all things are ours (1 Cor. 3:21). The lost are to be for the good of the saved. That is meant by being *ruled by* them. The peculiar expression, “**man who lends,**” balanced only by the participle “**borrower,**” not **man who borrows,** may have its proper intention. The “**man who lends**” is preeminently Christ. The world lives upon the church only as one form of living upon the adorable Redeemer.

This audacious claim, as the world thinks it, that the world is for the saints—a claim, which, by the way, has been wonderfully abused—the world, of course, treats with quiet scorn. Who own the world? Chiefly the lost. Who rule the world? Chiefly the wicked. Who teach the world? Chiefly impudent historians and scholars. The lost, therefore, think these are the obvious fruits of their earthly devotions. Now the next Proverb gives a distinct denial to any such belief:—

8 He that sows iniquity, reaps worthlessness; 8 He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity; and the rod of his anger shall fail.
and the rod of his career shall fail.

The late chapters have all been full of *precipitancy* as a trait

of sin (28 : 20). It is called *haste* (19 : 2). The aim of the impenitent is said to be *greedily to snatch* possessions (20 : 21). The fool is said to *push forward* (20 : 3); and, again, folly, to *pour itself forth* (21 : 24). “*Counsel*” is understood to be in the lost (20 : 5), but only troubling him, and causing him to know, better than his actions would make appear (Matt. 7 : 24-26). In this Proverb such precipitate careers are understood as giving a man a certain temporary dominion, which might disturb the thought that the lost are ruled over by the saved (v. 7). But the Proverb sets itself to a terse rejoinder. It takes two terms for “*iniquity*,” one meaning *crookedness*, the other meaning *nothingness*. It paints one as only breeding the other. It intends a positive law. Wheat breeds wheat; so “*iniquity*” breeds “*worthlessness*.” A man may live a thousand years, yet the harvest will be unvarying. And then, to meet the fact that the “*rod of his career*;” that is, the *sceptre of his pushing enterprise*; viz., the dominion that his ambition gives, does make him ruler even over the saints themselves, he employs a verb which expresses high action, but action that *exhausts itself*. Its literal sense is to *consume*. The idea is as of a fever, which wears down the patient and itself together. The saved shall rule over the lost (v.7). The borrower shall be servant to the lender. Impenitence shall but breed nothingness in the end (v. 8). But as the impenitent seem to have the whole “*rod*” or *sceptre* of our planet (even though they are rushing forward against an inward and a better light), the true solution is this, —that that “*rod*” is just budding out its strength. That hot “*career*” is a fever; it will exhaust itself. A man’s bold business may carry him to the high places of the earth; but it is the felled tree still putting forth leaves. “*Iniquity*” will reap vanity. And the sceptre of sin, however bold and high, may carry a man to many a victory in the world, only to illustrate in the end that “*the rod of his career shall fail*.” “*Career*;” not “*anger*” (E. V.); we miss in that way the whole point of the passage; but from the verb to *push along* or *roll forward*, remarked upon in the second clause of the third verse, and used often for the same trait of impenitence, under the hands of the same inspired teacher (18 : 1 ; 20 : 3).

In balancings of advantage Solomon likes to get back to what is inward. Mere selfishness will not save a man. He likes to return to what is excellent in itself, and keep that up as the highest motive of believing penitence. Not only is the borrower servant to the lender (v. 7), but the lender is inwardly rewarded, and that in his very beneficence itself:—

- 9 The bountiful eye, in its very self, is blessed;
because it has given away its own food to
the faint. 9 He that hath a
bountiful eye shall be
blessed; for he giveth
of his bread to the poor.

“**Eye**” is very rarely masculine (Cant. 4 : 9); but it may as well be in this case as in any other. The ambiguity, however, is, like most in the Proverbs (16 : 7; 23 : 3), a point of indifference. “**The bountiful of eye**” or “*the bountiful eye*,” either would answer. It would be, literally, “*the good eye*;” but, as that means something else in English, we resort, with the English Version, to the synonym “*bountiful*.” “**In its very self** ;” simply the emphatic pronoun. Holiness “*itself*” is the very highest reward of holiness. “The rich and the poor are fitted together” (v. 2) chiefly in the lost ministering to the bounty of the saved. The loss of one’s “*own food*” (second clause) is a worldly pain; but, in the philosophy of heaven, it is the very spice of the celestial banqueting. “*The bountiful eye is blessed*” for the very reason that “*it has given away its own food to the faint*.” “*Faint*,” usually “*poor*” (E. V.); but that designation for “*poor*” derived from a word meaning *weak* (see 14: 31).

Iniquity, then, being so fruitful of vanity (v. 8), and goodness so good in itself (v. 9), the Wise Man proceeds to clear away difficulties. There seems a great bank of enmity between God and the sinner,—of “**strife**” and also of “**shame**.” The Wise Man insists that rebellion is the only cause of it:—

- 10 Cast out the scorner, and the cause of
quarrel passes away; 10 Cast out the scorn-
er, and contention shall
go out; yea, strife and
reproach shall cease.

This thought occurs later (24:9). It occurs also in the

Psalms (Ps. 68 : 6). "Only the rebellious," the Psalmist says, shall come to mischief. There are, it is true, great mountains of wickedness; but take away this one element of **scorn**; that is, make a man submissive, and the cause of strife has flown. Christ manages afterwards. Take away the rebelliousness of the heart, and great monstrous sins will slowly be corrected and disappear. "**Cause of quarrel.**" This noun has the expressive **בַּיִת**, which, in material things, means *place*: in immaterial, like "*strife*" or "*quarrel*," may mean "*the cause*." It means that in the Psalms (Ps. 80 : 6). "Thou makest us a strife to our neighbors." We know no case where it is not susceptible of this interpretation (see 15 : 18). In the second clause it is without the **בַּיִת**. *Scorning* is not itself the "*cause*"; and, therefore, ceasing to scorn does not remove it directly. Christ must remove the "*cause*." Scorning expels Christ. Ceasing to scorn admits Christ. And, therefore, it is literally true,—"**Cast out the scorner** (it may be thine own scornful heart), and the *cause of quarrel passes away*; and strife and shame cease."

It is another encouragement that the **king loves purity of heart**. If there be any "*knowledge*" in the soul (see twelfth verse) He "*mounts guard over*" it. The least symptom of life He hails. "He taketh no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." And, therefore, His favorite "**companion**" is that "**graciousness of lips**" which pronounces pardon upon His returning enemies:—

- 11 The king, loving purity of heart,
has graciousness of his lips as his near
companion.

11 He that loveth
pureness of heart, for
the grace of his lips
the king shall be his
friend.

This is a fine confirmation of our reading previously (21 : 2). It is the genius of these texts to throw their subject last. "As to the ways of a man (16 : 2), right in His own eyes, and weighing out spirits, is Jehovah." There are other cases (27 : 9). In the present text, "*Loving purity of heart, the graciousness of his lips as his companion has the king.*" It is not without secular truth; but no one can dig into the context without seeing that it is the great assurance, that sins need not trouble us, because, if we will only drop our *scorning*, our sins will be removed (v. 10);

because our King (v. 11) loves purity, and, if we will quit our scornfulness, grace-utterances from His lips will be His chosen friends. This Proverb has been tortured more almost than any other. It is terse, and, therefore, may seem ambiguous. The gist of all comments has been to make man the lover of purity, and, then, to assure him that the king will be his friend. Bertheau pronounces it "*sehr schwer*" ("*very hard.*") We at first carved out the rendering,—“He that loves purity of heart, in the grace of his lips shall have a king for his friend:” that is, in his own graciousness, shall have a companion like a king. But a glance at the whole structure of the verse; our comparing it with the verses already cited, and its connection in the context, all lead us to the above-mentioned sense. Sin need not discourage us. If we drop our rebelliousness, God loves to make us pure; and grace on His lips is His companion and friend.

Still more, therefore, will He preserve piety, when it has begun:—

- 12 The eyes of Jehovah have mounted guard over knowledge; but He subverts the words of the faithless.
12 The eyes of the Lord preserve knowledge; and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor.

“**Knowledge**;” *piety*, even in its smallest beginnings; not only piety, but its belongings, though, of all its belongings, the greatest by far is piety itself. The moment it begins, God **mounts guard** over it. It is hard to conquer it, (Prov. 2 : 8). He furthers it in every way after its beginning. And then, as the opposite, comes a word usually translated “*transgressor*” (E. V.). Originally it means *false*; sometimes, “*treacherous*” (Judges 9 : 23). Its noun means *a spoiling* (Is. 24 : 16). It is balanced in this text against “*knowledge*.” The opposite of truth is falsehood. And, therefore, we prefer to keep what is primary. God watches knowledge, but upturns “**the words**” (sometimes *the affairs*; see Gen. 20 : 8) “*of the faithless*” or *false* man.

The inducements, thus employed, have this unspeakable defect,—that impenitence will admit their value, and still resist them. Doddridge averred that the mass of men are damned for laziness. There is an inert temper in the heart, when the

man outwardly may be very diligent. He fears to move. It has a shadowing in worldly sloth. The lazy man is afraid to start. He shrinks as though made of glass. All understand this when recalling their lazy tempers. Valetudinarian excuse is of all others the most ripe among the really indolent. But in religion it is worse. Take away every apology, and a man will invent a new one. Take away every new one, and the soul will be afraid yet. Nay, it will manufacture phantoms:—

- 13 The sluggard has been saying,—There is a lion in the street;
I shall be slain in the midst of the broad ways.

¹³ The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets.

“Saith” (E. V.); really a preterite. These Proverbs have usually the future. The future is a present continuing forward. Here we have a present tracing itself backward. The impenitent “has been [always] saying.” Age has not changed. Men have stuck to it for near a century. “There is a lion in the street,” just where one was never seen; “I shall be slain in the broad ways,” congregated with people. “There is a lion” at the mercy-seat. So that the minister quits answering the sluggard’s cavils, and tells each man plainly, These cries are symptomatic. There is no “lion” in the case. And a heart that will shape these phantoms would shape others if these were laid. The difficulty is sloth. In truth, “there is a lion;” but it is a bad heart, crouching against itself, and lurking to destroy the poor unwary sinner.

This inward power, the “folly” which is half “fettered in the heart of a child” (v. 15), he next paints under the image of a seductive woman (5:3; 7:10). There may be no “lion” to rend him in the streets, but there is “a pit” to sink him if he stays where he is:—

- 14 A deep pit is the mouth of strange women.
He at whom God is angry shall fall there.

¹⁴ The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.

Starting is not dangerous, but standing is. The Apostle has a picture for just this distinction. “To them that are conten-

lious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness" (Rom. 2:8); his meaning being, that men cavil or *contend* (literally, "are in strife") against the truth, but do not cavil against that much more suspicious thing, unrighteousness. Just so, men count the risks of faith; but who counts the risks of no faith? and dreads the "*lion in the way*" which is begotten of the soul's impenitency? "**Mouth;**" in that Eastern country, *agency*. "**Strange women;**" the type of *unbelief* (see Class I.). "*The mouth of strange women;*" the whole activities of sin. They hold men like one fallen into "*a pit*." The second clause adds altogether a second story to the structure by saying, that these "*strange women*," *pit* and *sin* together, are all penalties of God (Rom. 1:28). It is a dreadful doctrine. Impenitency is a punishment for impenitence. God's **anger** keeps it. It would have no power at all, except it were given it by the law. "*The strength of sin is the law*" (1 Cor. 15:56). "*A deep pit is the mouth of strange women;*" but only "**he at whom God is angry**" can possibly "**fall there.**"

If God intend us mercy, He will drive out our sloth by chastisement; and this specially when we are children:—

15 Folly is fettered in the heart of a child.

The rod of correction removes it from him.

15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

'**Fettered.**' It might have different meanings. Idiomatically it might mean *strong*. See Gen. 30:42, where Jacob tricked Laban about the cattle. "The feeble were Laban's, and the *strong* (literally, the *bound*) were Jacob's." This is a rare meaning, and not likely to be the meaning here, because "**folly**" is not likely to be strong "**in the heart of a child**," if it mean religious impenitency. "**Bound**" is, therefore, the English Version. *Firmly knit; closely settled; well tied in*; that is, *fixed in the childish spirit*: this is the sense of nearly all the commentators. Of course, there are great difficulties at once. The fact theologically is just the opposite. "**Folly**" is not fixed in the childish heart; but stronger and stronger in periods afterward. Why not, *pro vero*, "**bound?**" In much the majority of texts it means simply *tied down*, or "**fettered**."

"Folly is fettered in the heart of a child;" that is, tied down, and, in many natural ways, repressed. This is literally the case. It is weak, and hemmed in, and easier to grapple with and drag out of the soul in youth than in any other period. Why was not this at first glance the accepted rendering? For, in as many as a score of ways; by baptism, and by parental laws; by its own childish fears; by the child's tender state; *folly is bound in the heart of the child*, and much easier to be removed, than in hardened and determined old age. "**Removes;**" Hiphil of goes. We cannot drive out "folly," but we can make it go. Chastisement, by leading to thought, will move a child voluntarily to "go" from the ways of evil.

We must be careful, however, how we administer chastisement. There is a mighty difference in the *modus quo*. The saved and the lost are fitted together (v. 2). The lost are for the good of the saved (v. 7); but this is deep doctrine, and God, not we, is to act it forth. We are to give pain for reproof, but not for selfishness. It was horrible days of persecution when the cry was,—“The earth is for the saints, and we are the saints.” So now,—

- 16 He that oppresses the weak man, to make increase for himself, gives to the rich man, only with poverty as the result.

16 He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.

"Weak;" usually *poor* (E. V.). We prefer what is primary, where it is agreeable to the sense. "Weak," secularly; (for the Proverb is true as a worldly one;) but "weak" spiritually, *ex proposito*, i. e., *impenitent*. We are not to mimic God's judgments. (See also verse 22). "He that oppresses" the lost either for spiritual or temporal selfishness, "gives to" the saved, or fancies he does, but only "**with the result** (of) poverty." "*With the result;*" simply 3. If a man thinks he is "rich," what has been stated makes him more poor; or, if he really is rich, (of course, I mean spiritually) it keeps him less rich, and is one of those impoverishing acts which disciplines will have to overcome. A favorite version, which would thrust aside this, makes each clause distinct, and the *increasing* spoken

of apply to the “*weak man*,” not to his oppressor. The verse would then read, “*He that oppresses the weak man increases him*,” or gives him strength; “*he that gives to the rich man*” impoverishes him, or “*does it only with the result of poverty*.” The meaning would then be,—He that oppresses the weak, disciplines him, and brings a blessing upon him; while he that gives to the rich, relaxes him, and tends to make him poor, and to make himself poor, too, for want of a blessing. The difficulty there is, that this is not true. The poor may be poorer by oppression, and the rich richer. It is not true spiritually. The lost often perish by the neglect of the saved. In fact they always do. The grammar of such a rendering is no better. (Alas for the ambiguities of speech! that it should be as good!). The sense that we have above given is complete. And the connection is so perfect that we have no hesitation in fixing very emphatically upon our chosen rendering.

Discipline, at best, is but an awkward agency. Why not come without it to the wisdom it would beget? The Wise Man is returning ever to this direct entreaty. We do not think, as most do, that this is a new poem. There are said to be differences of style. ~~is~~ is used oftener, and some other words. If that be anything else than accident, the new hand, in our belief, has added his new matter with a view to the previous Proverbs. Discipline is good (13:24); but there is something unspeakably better; and that he goes on to characterize as immediate attention:—

17 Incline thine ear and hear the words of
the wise,
and thou shalt incline thine heart to my
knowledge.

17 Bow down thine
ear, and hear the words
of the wise, and apply
thine heart unto my
knowledge.

This sounds like the openings of the earlier Proverbs (5:1; 7:1). The repetition is significant. The life of the soul is attention. If that be persevered in, all things follow. God only can give saving light. And yet by laws like the planetary system He will give it on the *bending of the “ear.”* Alas for us! we will not even do this much without His influence. Nevertheless He urges the promise, *Bend the ear*, “**and thou shalt**

incline thine heart." It is a law, though it be a law of grace. God has framed it. Hear outwardly, and thou shalt feel with in. Such is our nature (2: 1-5), and it is shrewd to use it. The *inclining* is from Him; but the *advice* also is from Him! Shrink not from the advice because His strength is needed to make it His chosen instrument. Bend thine ear to wisdom, and the result in getting "**knowledge**," though it may need His Spirit, yet will be as certain as the dawn of Heaven.

Moreover, it can last when we get it. This is the wonder to others. Here one has been trying to be a better man, and begins to be one from a sudden epoch. Others wrestle with their faults, and fall back into them again. Nothing can be more fitful than all moral reformations. But here, in spiritual life, a flash shoots up, and we never return to darkness. Why is this? "**Because it is pleasant**," says the next Proverb. It becomes "**fixed**" because of its principle as of a second nature. *If we "watch over them" till they become "pleasant," "the words of the wise" "get fixed together upon [our] lips."* This is the account *instrumentally*; and it is the inward view of every case of final perseverance:—

- 18 **Because** it is pleasant because thou dost
watch over them within thyself;
therefore they shall get fixed together upon
thy lips.

¹⁸ For *it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips.*

"**Because.**" A new sentence. The apodosis is afterward (second clause). "**Pleasant;**" the whole act (v. 17), rather than "**knowledge**," which is feminine, or than any one of the substantive expressions. "**Because;**" as repeated, not similar to the first, but subordinate. The first *because* is explanatory of how *right words* (v. 17) "*get fixed [firm] upon [the] lips;*" viz., that a certain course has become "**pleasant**." The second explains how they have become "**pleasant**," in showing what our part was; viz., that they have been *watched over in our inward spirits*. The whole is a beautiful account of the Grace of Perseverance. When we *watch over right words*, which (Orientaliter) stand for all right actions, God rewards us by making them

"pleasant;" and so, even as in heaven itself, they become "fixed" as the very habit of our lips.

This enables the Wise Man to state in the minutest method his end in preaching. It is, to make men "know;" that is, to give them "knowledge" (see v. 17):—

- 19 That thy ground of trust may come to be
in Jehovah,
I have made thee know this day, even¹⁹ That thy trust
may be in the LORD, I
have made known to
thee this day, even to
thee.

"Ground of trust;" that most expressive ה prefixed, to which we have already alluded (22:10). "That may come to be;" simply ה with the verb "to be." Just like the pronoun, when expressed (10:22), so this verb, when expressed, becomes emphatic. The idea of existence usually has no verb. "Let there be light" (Gen. 1:3) means,—Let light *come to be*. So here, the writing of the verb imparts to it the edge of an event, and makes it refer to an actual occurrence;—"That thy ground of trust may come to be in Jehovah;" that is, that thou mayest be converted in the only evangelical way, viz., with a right "ground of trust." "I have made thee know this day, even thee." This is all that the soul needs;—*to be made to know*. This is the sum of all regeneration. It must be a change such that we come to "know;" and therefore that very emphatic expression,—"*even thee*." It must be no book "knowledge," but a light in one's self. It might seem arrogant for the Wise Man to talk of giving it; but we are commanded to give it to ourselves (v. 17). It is but a tribute to God's truth, where instrumentally we are faithful. Solomon marks the whole object of his preaching. As crumbs into a starving man, if he can get in a little light, the soul lives; and lives in that first feature of life, one's "ground of trust [coming] to be Jehovah." "*Even thee*," strangely enough, is nominative; and yet all treat it as an accusative. It occurs somewhat so elsewhere (see Ges. Gr. § 119, 2); and perhaps not without reason. Had it been literally accusative, there might have been doubt whether it did not point to the knowing of oneself. As it is, it is a most emphatic return upon the idea, that ourselves, by a change within

ourselves, must come to "know ;" and to "know," first of all, "our trust," viz., the Most High.

Instead of arrogance, Solomon only means to say that he has done all he could to make them "*know*," and that inwardly. He uses the image of *writing*, which in those days was something grave (Job 19:23) :—

- 20 Have I not written for thee eminent things
as counsels and knowledge? | 20 Have I not writ-
ten to thee excellent
things in counsels and
knowledge;
21 that I might make thee know the verity of
words of truth,
so as to return words of truth to them that
send for thee? | 21 That I might
make thee know the
certainty of the words
of truth; that thou
mighest answer the
words of truth to them
that send unto thee?

How exact is all this! How the preacher labors! Let us begin at his most expressive terminus. We are to be *sent for!* some certain day. "**Those that send**" is but the Proverbial cast (25:2). *Him that sends* is the more perfect meaning. As sure as the stars we shall be *sent for* one day; and one thing will be exacted from us, and only one in the creation, and that is *light*. The man without *light* perishes. Solomon says, his whole aim has been to press light upon the sinner. "**Have I not written?**" he says (that most expressive act), and "**have I not written eminent things?**" (There has been a great controversy about this word. It comes from the number *three*. It means *chief* or *principal*. But see Gesenius. See for opposite opinions, Maurer, etc.). "**Have I not written eminent things as** (literally, *in**) **counsels and knowledge?**" Have I not done, and that under Scriptural promises, the very best things to secure my object? And is not that object, now, "**that I might make thee know the verity of words of truth?**" This Hebrew is very peculiar. "*Words of truth*" are easily uttered. "*Counsels and knowledge*" of the deepest sort may be in the minds of infidels. We may teach a child the very intricacies of faith. But there is a "**verity**" at its deepest root that the "*natural man*" cannot perceive (1 Cor. 2:14). To express this, Solomon uses a very infrequent word. It means (*in radice*)

*  *essentia.*

to *weigh out*, so as to be exact. That I might make thee know the *exactness* of words of truth. The meaning is that “*verity*” which is seen by a Christian eye. It is a holy “*verity*.” When scholars have gone deep, it is a moral taste that goes deeper. It is the eyes of our “*heart*” (see Re.) being enlightened; a פָּתַח; a heavenly *verity*; which, after all, is but the conscience of a man enlightened, and (creeds remaining the same) seeing new difference between sin and holiness. This פָּתַח (and there is something expressive in the very newness of the word), as what the skeptic lacks, though he understand a creed just as well as the Christian: a simple thing, and yet an eternal secret; this it is that Solomon so labored to impart; and he emphasizes his work by saying that it will be called for at the last day. This פָּתַח will be demanded as inexorably as fate. We must see it, or see the pit. It will be asked for in the Judge’s first question, and nothing else. It is the very light of the Wise Virgins (Matt. 25:1); and hence the beautiful painting of the Proverb,—“*That I might make thee know the פָּתַח of words of truth; so as to return words of truth to them that send for thee.*”

Next, an interval by the copyists seems to mean a falling off upon some new trains on the part of the inspired Sentence-Maker. He plainly, however, holds on to the idea (v. 16), that we are not to count the lost as the servants of the saved (v. 7) in such a sense as to treat them so in our own administration:—

22 Rob not the weak because he is weak,
and crush not the afflicted in the gate.

22 Rob not the poor,
because he is poor;
neither oppress the af-
flicted in the gate;

If any commentator teaches that men “*rob*” the poor because they are poor and, therefore, are not able to defend themselves; and that they “*crush*” for like reason “*the afflicted in the gate*;” i. e., in what in the East was the court of law; of course I admit that meaning; and I admit the Proverb as with all that sort of lower and yet virtuous monition. But it is all that, as the nut is both the kernel and the shell. The kernel was something a great deal richer. It was this:—We

instinctively shrink from the abandoned. We owe the poor in God's spiritual commonwealth a wise looking after. We incontinently avoid them. We "rob the weak because he is weak." If Matthew be a publican, we would never look at him. If a woman be a Canaanite, we would "send her away" (Matt. 15 : 23). It is rooted in the Church not to expect anything from the profligate; and, hence, though it is very true that God means to give peoples for us, we undertake to arrogate that, and to do it for ourselves. We rob the weak because they are weak: and, when great counsels are invoked in enterprises for the good of the church, we far too easily decide against the abandoned, and, in this way, "*crush the afflicted in the gate.*"

Solomon puts us on our guard:—

23 because Jehovah takes their case; | 23 For the Lord will
and has already robbed the soul of them | plead their cause, and
that rob them. | spoil the soul of those
| that spoiled them.

That is, the church suffers for all its hard dealing with the world. The *perfect*, in the second clause, means that they have suffered "*already*." It shows, therefore, *how* they suffer, that is in this very hardness. And this is further expressed by the mention of the "*soul*." "*Plead their cause*" (E. V.). This is a handsomer expression; but not so strong a one. The Hebrew is, "*wages their quarrel*," or "*strives their strife*," or, as the "*gate*" has been mentioned (v. 22), "*takes their case*:" the meaning is,—not always to gain it for the lost, but to push it against the church. The church is "*robbed*," literally, *as to the soul*, when it fails of the command, "*Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thy hand to do it.*"

Nevertheless we must keep the right balance; for there is a labor for the lost which is positively forbidden:—"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine; lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you" (Matt. 7 : 6):—

- 24 Associate not thyself with a fierce man;
and to a man of hot tempers go not in;
25 lest thou grow accustomed to his ways,
and take a snare to thy soul.

²⁴ Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go;
²⁵ Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.

Some men are very hardened, and yet very courteous. The Proverb does not so much forbid our influence upon them. But some men are fiercely insulting. They are angry when Christ is even named. We are to let those men alone. Above all we are “**not [to] associate with**” them. For *association* will have its influence; and while it will do harm to them, it may do mischief also to us.

Specially we are to keep clear of that powerful contagion by which procrastinating impenitence spreads in the way of example. It is compared repeatedly to *striking hands*, and becoming “**surety for debts**” (11:15). The bond of guiltiness is virtually reassumed (17:18), when we fail to cancel it at the cross of Jesus. Men do this in herds; and the strange influence of having company carries us along in this singular neglect. The Proverb cautions us against it:—

- 26 Be not among those that strike hands,
and among those that are surety for debts.
27 If thou hast nothing to pay,
wherefore should one take thy bed from
under thee?

²⁶ Be not thou *one* of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts.
²⁷ If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?

“**Be not.**” The verb is expressed (v. 19). “*Do not come to be.*” *Striking hands* is not common impenitence. It is rather deliberate turning aloof. “*Surety.*” Those who distinctly accept their liabilities. Be not an associate with such persons; even though thou mayest think thou art not really of them. “**Thy bed.**” This is the strong thought of perdition. It *takes* our very “*bed.*” It is very well to do without God in this world, but our very “*bed,*” the only pleasures, and the only tranquillities of life, are to be snatched, and we are to be left to lie in everlasting burnings.

Be careful, young men, not to relax what your “**fathers**” taught you; “**not [to] draw back**” the line of principle which they marked:—

28 Draw not back the ancient boundary
which thy fathers set.

28 Remove not the
ancient land-mark
which thy fathers have
set.

This is a graphic tendency of youth, as families continue to flourish—to grow lax as to the principles of their founders. This corrupts the church. This lost Shiloh and the churches of the East. This spread Paganism. See Mal. 4:6. There is a fever on the part of sons to push back the ancient landmark. “*Draw back;*” not, “*remove*” (E. V.). A removal might be further in. It is always one way; and not an altogether-removal, but very partial; in fact, very gradual. The verb, which is a very peculiar one, neatly expresses the slow receding of the ancient lines.

There being all these dangers; from company (v. 24); from example (v. 25); and, now, from family degeneration (v. 28); the Wise Man strikes upon a more immediate evidence of prudence, and that is, bold action at once to save the soul. Caution may be very grand; but prompt work is unspeakably grander:—

29 Seest thou a man quick in his errand?
He shall stand before kings;
he shall not stand before mean men.

29 Seest thou a man
diligent in his busi-
ness? he shall stand
before kings; he shall
not stand before mean
men.

A regiment is cut to pieces, if it halts. Its hope of safety is to dash recklessly up. Ten thousand cautions are not as good as one act of faith. “*Errand;*” from the same verb from which is derived *angel*. It implies *being sent on a message*. “*Quick;*” from the verb to *hasten*. A “*quick*” messenger is a treasure for a *king*; and so our “*quick*” running of our “*errand*” is our rôle with the Lord that sent us. Caution is, of course, discreet; but “*quick*” repentance is the thing required of us.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The picture of one *standing before kings* (22:29) seems to associate itself in the Inspired Monarch with the fact that we

are always **sitting with** a KING ; because, not as a reward, but out of our deep dependence, we are sitting perpetually at the Feast of Life. This fills him with solemn admonitions :—

- 1 Forasmuch as thou sittest to eat with a Ruler,** discern well Who is before thee ; WHEN thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee ;
2 and thou hast put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. 2 And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.

Here secular meaning there is none. Just where the learned dream no dream of Jehovah, there is no answer in the language consistently to any one beside. “**Forasmuch as thou sittest to eat with a Ruler, discern well Who is before thee.**” So far might answer partially; but even there the **וְ** of the first member (“*forasmuch*”) has a taking-for-granted air; as all men are not necessarily called to feast with kings. But the moment we strike the second verse, rough difficulties commence. We “**have [not] put a knife to [our] throat if [we happen to be men of remarkable] appetite.**” Kings like to see their guests eat. At the very utmost, this part of our behavior is a matter of indifference. But of God nothing could be more exact. We are all eating with Him; in fact, feeding upon Him; as though He were “**Himself**” bread (see v. 3). “*Forasmuch*,” therefore, is just in place. *Discerning well Who is before us*; that, also, is perfectly consistent. And then, our sin! what is that? Why, fleshly appetite! What is innocent at courts is idolatry in the Banquet of the Skies. Solomon has rung all changes:—*Being hasty* (19:2); *pushing recklessly* (20:3); *greedily getting* our earthly possessions (20:21); the wicked *craving* all the day long (21:26); and, finally, the wicked being unable to please God by *craving* (21:17); all these have filled up our recent context. Serving the creature more than the Creator,—Paul expresses it; and gives us ample analogy of a New Testament kind (Rom. 1:25; see also James 4:3) for understanding how we *have put a knife to our throat, if we be men given to appetite.* Moreover; anticipating a little, so as to throw the proofs all together; what is meant, with an earthly ruler, by his being “*himself deceitful food*” (v. 3)? And what

is meant, in the midst of the thread of the discourse, by saying, “*Labor not to create wealth*” (v. 4); and still more (just when a man’s wits should be most in play, if he had a mere prince to deal with), what is meant by the immediate caution, “*Cease from thine own discernment*”? But let us complete the lesser comments. “*Discern well;*” *discerning, discern*; just as “*dying, thou shalt die*” (Gen. 2 : 17). We are always particular to translate, “*discern;*” because such is the word. It means to *discriminate*; that is, to *distinguish* from something else. In Greek, we are to *discern the Lord’s body* (1 Cor. 11 : 29). And the word here is itself significant. We may be gluttons with an earthly prince; but we are to *discern* when this King is before us. “**Who;**” most commentators say “*what*” (E. V.). We say “*who,*” because the pronoun would be the same, and the reading, not so given, is almost meaningless. “*Thou hast put.*” The English Version gives the imperative. But we know of no such idiom, except one born of this mistranslation; and the verb itself is in the past tense; and, therefore, not imperative in any unstrained way. “*To thy throat;*” literally, *in.* Thou hast already destroyed thyself (emphatic past) “*if thou be a man given to appetite.*” “*Given to,*” etc.; literally, *master of soul.* For *master of* as meaning *characterized by*, see 24 : 8; and for *soul* as meaning “*appetite*” see 6 : 30. “*If he steal to satisfy his appetite.*”

The world is God’s own; and is itself the dainty feast He spreads for us; but we are to be careful how we thirst for it:—

3 Long not after His dainty meats;
while He is Himself deceitful food.

3 Be not desirous of
his dainties; for they
are deceitful meat.

This is a good distinction. The world is not so disappointing as God. The world might be heaven, if God were different; if He were not angry with us. The Proverb boldly tells us (v. 7) that He “*has an evil eye.*” Now all this, of course, is an accommodation; it is, as Paul would have it, *speaking as a man* (Rom. 3 : 5). It is like saying, God repents (Gen. 6 : 6), and, God is angry (Ps. 7 : 11), and, God is furious (Nah. 1 : 2), and jealous (Ex. 20 : 5), and grieved (Heb. 3 : 10,) and a tempter (Gen. 22 : 1), and a deceiver (Jer. 20 : 7), and sends a lying spirit (1 Ki.

22 : 22); in one word, it is like the Unjust Judge (Luke 18 : 6), as we have elsewhere illustrated (19 : 6, 7; also v. 6); speaking after the manner of men to get out the truth; and yet it is literally true. God's "**dainty meats**" do deceive us; but it is through our fault. The world itself, rich food, good wines, fair women, power to sin, nerves to be debauched, sense to be intoxicated, power to be craved—nay, as our text intimates, God Himself, may become (literally) *a food of deceits*; and one of the very commandments of the ten makes it a sin to covet after them. "*Dainty meats*;" from a verb to taste; with the expressive **תָּבוֹת** (15 : 8; 22 : 10) meaning the *ground of taste*; i. e., the thing to be tasted. "**While**;" simply "*and*:" translated "*while*," because the conjunction here marks the condition *attendant*; or why we are to guard our appetite. "**He Himself**." This calling of God the "*food*" might be avoided. No masculine precedes, to meet the pronoun which is expressed (10 : 22) and emphatic (Class X.); but we might count it drawn forward (see Grammar) to "*food*," which is of either gender. But this would be the less likely grammar, and the other the far better sense. It does indeed take the Proverb out of all secular use; but this is done any how (v. 2); and is so in other cases (24 : 21, 22; 25 : 2). The bold, grand rendering is, that God "*has an evil eye*" (v. 6); that is, that He is angry with the sinner; that He says, "*Eat and drink [when] His heart is not with [us]*" (v. 7). He is estranged from us; and the food we eat, Christ tells us, is "*another man's*" (Lu. 16 : 12). He is, therefore, *food of deceits*, because He lavishes upon us the bounties of His Providence, when for all these things God will bring us into judgment.

The man in the parable, (Luke 12 : 19), however, did not feast so much as tell when he would feast. Our lust does not enjoy so much as "**long**" and "**labor**." The "**rich man**" did not say to his soul, "*Take thine ease;*" but, as is most graphic in the parable, "*I will pull down my barns.*" He laid out a load of "**labor**," instead of enjoying a world of "**ease**." For it was after razing and building greater, that he was then to address his soul, and say,—"*Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years.*" The cast of these Proverbs now is in

close analogy. They do not say,—*Eat not “His dainty meats,”* but “long not after” them: and immediately, as though aiming at the Rich Man in the Parable,—Do not lay up for them:—

- 4 Labor not to create wealth.
Cease from thine own discernment. | 4 Labour not to be
rich; cease from thine
own wisdom.

The verb *to be rich*, which is the one in the first clause, in the Hiphil would be to *make rich*. It sometimes means this in Scripture (Dan. 11:2). But often this form is used when “*to create wealth*” is as near as we can come to the causative. We translate it so here. “*Labor* ;” the original implies, *with pain*. The Christian should never do this for anything. His work even for Christ, should be, like Gabriel’s, cheered and trustful. How deep, too, the second clause goes! It drifts quite away from anything among earthly kings. The courtier who *ceases from his own discernment* is a fool. The sinner who does so is a Royal Banqueter. The verse means more than this. There being a heavenly “*wealth*” (8:18), which the sinner can never gain by just lusting after it selfishly (21:17); that also is included in the command, “*Labor not to create wealth.*” There is a “*labor*” even for heaven that is forbidden. It has been often very painful. Monks and world-trampling devotees have given life for their salvation. But they have *labored* in the forbidden way. They have not *ceased from their own discernment*. And, therefore, in self-righteousness, and self-sanctification, and self-dependence, and, *imprimis*, self-seeking (21:17; Matt. 10:39) all together, they are sure to fail of the grace of life.

Even God may be longed after from a distance in a way that may be utterly disappointing. He is “*bread*,” but He may be “*deceitful bread*” (v. 3). A mistake may be, to look “**after Him with [our] eyes**,” and “do not the things which (He) says” (Lu. 6:46):—

- 5 Wilt thou fly after Him with thine eyes,
and He not there?
For He is certain to make to Himself
wings | 5 Wilt thou set thine
eyes upon that which
is not? for riches cer-
tainly make themselves
wings; they fly away;
as an eagle toward
heaven.

This is an extreme rendering. We fear few will like it. We,

on the whole, prefer it. We do so because there is no noun near to fit the pronoun. We prefer it, because, in verse third, He is called "*deceitful food*." Yet there, and in this verse both, a little straining would supply a noun, and the wealth, not God, would be the thing that is deceitful, and that is to "**fly away**." And yet where is the difference? It is undoubtedly true that these equivocals are found where they are matters of indifference. We are at the feast of God. Whether He deceives or His feast deceives (speaking *kata avθρωπον*, as Paul does, Rom. 3:5); and, therefore, afterward, whether He *flies away*, or His feast *flies away*, is all one; so, the reason of our choice is very much the simplicity of the grammar. If any one, therefore, prefer the other, it suits our general rendering. Even spiritual wealth, if merely flown after with the eye, will "**not [be] there**." It will be *sure to make itself wings as an eagle, and fly away to the very heavens*. "**Wilt thou fly**" (clause 1st)? "**and fly away**" (clause 3d), both offer varied readings. The Hiphil might be chosen in either case. The Hiphil would be found nowhere else for this verb *to fly*. It would mean in the first clause,—"*Dost thou cause thine eyes to fly, etc.*" To choose between this sense and the one above would have no practical consequence. Others retain the Kal, and make "eyes" (plural) agree with "*fly*" (singular); but there is no good in pleading for such an exception. The rendering we have given suits every precedent:—"Wilt thou *fly as to thine eyes*" or "**with thine eyes**," &c? On the other hand, in the final clause, the Hiphil would be very peculiar. We might choose it, for it is the *receptus*; but it would be without all precedent. It would make the "**heavens**" the thing to fly. We have looked at the word *heaven*, and it has no such movable sense. We nowhere hear of giving heaven, or taking away heaven, or even of losing heaven. Like the firmament, it is fixed. It is not of analogy, therefore, to think of the heavens as *flying away*. Otherwise we might insist upon the Hiphil, and say, not only that God (or wealth) makes to Himself wings like an eagle, and thus strips us of all our present feast; but also *makes heaven fly away*. This would be favored by there being no preposition before heaven, or suffix after it, but still not to the extent of proof; for

toward heaven, and to heaven, or into heaven, are expressed in other places, after a verb like that of flight, by the accusative, without the assistance of any particle (1 Sam. 5: 12). "Certain to make;" "making He shall make," like "dying thou shalt die" (Gen. 2: 17).

Not only are we not to long after the mere dainties of the feast (v. 3), but we are not to eat them with God unwilling:—

- | | |
|---|---|
| 6 Feed not on the food of Him that has an evil eye ;
and long not after His dainty meats. | 6 Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats ; |
| 7 For as He has made an estimate in His soul, so is He.
Eat and drink, He says to thee ; but His heart is not with thee. | 7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he : Eat and drink, saith he to thee ; but his heart is not with thee. |
| 8 Thy morsel, that thou hast eaten, thou shalt vomit up ;
and lose thy sweet words. | 8 The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words. |

"*An evil eye.*" The opposite of "*a bountiful eye*" (chap. 22: 9). Keeping up the idea of innocence, as we must even when reading of "*the unjust judge*" (Lu. 18: 6), the eye of God is the most "*evil eye*" that we can possibly conceive. If God be angry, delicate delights are not only deceitful food, but poisons that we shall some day "*vomit up*." It is mad to have our very living of "*the mammon of unrighteousness*" (Lu. 16: 9). God spreads the curtain of the night over us, and wakes us to the bounties of the day. "**He says, Eat and drink to [us]**" by all the voices under heaven ; yet there is this terrible "*deceit*" (v. 3), that "**His heart is not with [us]**." And though it is a deceit for which we only are responsible ; as the Wise Man has sufficiently explained in other passages (1: 24 ; 20: 5) ; yet it has for the bewildered victim all the fatality of a snare. The very Gospel is made a trap to us. We are baited on by its alluring hopes. And as we fly only as to our eyes upon its far-off promises, they are getting ready to make themselves wings. And many a man, eloquent in his worldliness, and with the tongue of men and angels (1 Cor. 13: 1) in his prayers, has but secured a morsel of hope which he must vomit up, and (literally,) "*has destroyed*" (emphatic perfect) his "*sweet words*."

"**Of Him that has an evil eye;**" literally, *of an evil eye*, or, *of one evil of eye*. "*Eye*" is rarely masculine. There is the same unimportant ambiguity as in the instance of "*the bountiful eye*" (chap. 22 : 9). "**As He has made an estimate in His soul.**" This verb occurs nowhere else. In the Arabic it means to be *divided*, or *cleft open*. Hence the noun for *a gate*. In this sense it would mean, "*like as one who has become divided in his soul.*" *Dividing*, however, means *judging* (Lu. 12 : 14). There are unfailing reasons for supposing such a significance here. God spreads the banquet of Nature, and men throng to the feast; but, alas! deceived ones! He *makes an estimate* of every one of them. "*As He has made an estimate in His soul, so is He. Eat and drink, He says to [many], while His heart is not with [them].*" They are feeding "*on the food of Him that has an evil eye.*" And whatever their toil has been, and their eloquent success, the *morsel that they have eaten they must vomit up, and lose all their sweet words.*

So of others. If we ourselves cannot be saved by letting our eyes fly even upon the good things of the kingdom, it is useless for us to hope anything, or to labor anything, for men, if we could know that they were thus persistently standing away:—

- 9 In the ears of a fool thou shalt not speak ; ⁹ Speak not in the ears of a fool; for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.
if there be the reason that he despise the wisdom of thy words.

We build here upon the construction. It does not say that we are not to "**speak in the ears of a fool;**" for that would forbid all preaching to the impenitent, and the second clause would only mean that they would never hear (E. V.) Now some do hear. The hinge of the sentence is כִּי (because). "**Thou shalt not speak;**" but only when there exist a certain "**reason,**" viz., "**that he despise, &c.**" כִּי has been translated *when*. It has been translated also *if*. (See Gesenius). We prefer always some shadow of the sense, *because*. It would make sense perfectly to say,—*Speak not, &c., when or if they despise.* But we prefer to incorporate the idea of "*reason.*" The sense is, that contempt on the part of a fool is "*reason*" enough to desist from speaking.

Solomon, however, is always receding within his guards. We must not waste our pearls (Matt. 7:6): but then, at the same time, we must not tempt others to trample them:—

- 10 Draw not back the ancient boundary; and into the fields of the fatherless go not thou. to Remove not the old land-mark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless:
- 11 For their Redeemer is mighty: He Himself will take their case with thee. ix For their Redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.

While we must not force religion upon the scoffer, we must take care that we do not relax religion in the eyes of the scoffer. This is the great danger; the world has been ruined by the church. It is out of the bosom of the faith that changes have come that have debauched the people. Lost men, even though profligate, are God's orphans. For the church to "**draw back the boundary**" is to ruin everything. And though lost men be not saved; though it is not in this sense that He takes their case (see 22:23); yet, as against believers, it is God's highest displeasure when they debauch and corrupt the impenitent. "**Draw not back.**" We noticed this word before. It is the insidious step of a slow recession from the truth. In the East, with no fences, a landmark could be slyly moved back. "**Into the fields.**" Each "**fatherless**" man has a poor acre of hope. "**Their Redeemer;**" He "**is** the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe" (1 Tim. 4:10). "**Mighty.**" Would that they knew it! "**Take their case;**" "**plead their cause**" (E. V.). The Hebrew is downright. He "**takes**" their quarrel; and wages it Himself against the believer. "**Himself;**" the emphatic pronoun.

One thing we can always do for the wicked:—be wise ourselves. One thing stands always in preeminence over all other means for others, i. e., a godlier and a still godlier example. Solomon does not forget this:—

- 12 Let thine own heart enter into discipline, and thine own ears to the words of knowledge. 12 Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge.

The most terrible way of removing old boundaries is to set the debauching example of a recreant believer. The saint must

do the same things as the impenitent ; not simply *let fly his eyes* (v. 5), but *bring near his "heart," and apply his "ears."*

Now a fourth precept.—Mark the order. First, we must not urge ourselves upon an utter despiser (v. 9). Second, we must not debauch even him by unsettling the landmarks of religion. Third, we must shame him by a bright example. Fourth, if he be young, or, as the word more properly means “*a child*” (v. 13), we must treat him with more rigor. “*Folly is bound in a child*” (22:15), and we can deal with it more masterfully. We are not to cast our pearls before swine ; but we are not to count children swine so readily as older sinners :—

- 13** Withhold not from a child correction. **13** Withhold not correction from the child :
That thou beatest him with a rod shall be | for if thou beatest him
the reason that he shall not die. | with the rod, he shall
not die.
- 14** Thyself beat him with a rod, **14** Thou shalt beat
and thou shalt snatch his soul from Sheol. him with the rod, and
shalt deliver his soul
from hell.

“**Withhold not.**” From *a despiser* we were to “*withhold*” (v. 9). But, now, “*a child*” is entirely different. He may be a scoffer; but he is “*a child*. ” The way to cure a scoffer is to take him when he is “*a child*. ” Many reasons blend themselves for this. In the first place he is “*bound*” (22:15). He cannot resist as an old man can. In the second place, he may be my child ; and I ought to be moved by the warmest and deepest affection. In the third place, there is a special promise to youth (Ec. 12:1). And in the fourth place, there is a still more special promise to those who care for them. There are, perhaps, but two promises in the Bible ; one to personal faith, and the other to the care of parents. Both have the seal of baptism. Both, I believe, are absolute. Both, therefore, have positive sacraments. And this, which relates to a child, colors all these sentences. There is a positiveness about them (see 22:6 ; also Jer. 31:16) which may be quoted as absolute. And in this Proverb, though the child may be out-breaking, so that, in the instance of a man, we would be excused from touching him (Matt. 7:6) ; though the *ultima ratio* of the “*rod*” is to shape the appeal ; yet the promise is complete :—“*That thou beatest him with a rod shall be the reason*

that he shall not die. Thyself beat him with a rod, and thou shalt snatch his soul from Sheol." "That, etc., shall be the reason that." All this is expressed by יְכֹן (because). The English Version has it "*for if.*" We prefer (see in 2:18; also Ps. 116:10) something more complete as expressive of "*reason.*" The promise is to the parent; but it is *because* of this difficult faithfulness. Some understand it as meaning,—the child "*shall not die*" under the strokes. But this is paltry; untrue, if the parent gives too savage a beating; unconducive to the context; and not in agreement with what is direct in the verse that follows. "*Die;*" die eternally. *Do thou thyself beat him* (*תַּפְאֵל*). Do not delegate the thing to schoolmasters. Do not sink the advantage that you are his father and his friend. And, above all, do not sink the saint. This is the chief meaning. Let it be *yourself* that "*beat him.*" In beating him be yourself. And let it be the warm nurture of the most saintly interest in his behalf that he marks upon your face. "*And thou shalt snatch his soul from Sheol.*" "*Snatch;*" betokening the rigid measures used. "*Sheol;*" the imagined *Hades*; then a figure of the Pit. As *death* for *spiritual death*, so this for *Hell*.

Now, more beautifully still: the Proverb personates the father; and, instead of a round-about speech, utters the temper that should inspire the beating. There will be no good unless the father shows the son that it will be his highest joy if the son learns wisdom:—

- 15 My son, if thy heart be wise,
my heart shall rejoice, yea, mine.
16 Yea, my very reins shall exult
at thy lips' speaking right things.

15 My son, if thine
heart be wise, my heart
shall rejoice, even
mine.
16 Yea, my reins
shall rejoice when thy
lips speak right things.

If thou be *really* "*wise!*" That is the caution of the first clause. If it be no sham thing, but an affair of the "*heart;*" then "*my heart shall rejoice,*" down in the same depths. And then, as men are great actors, and may *look* virtue as they whip a child, when they do not feel it much, Solomon protests that it must be real. Each part of this sentence must be meant. Not,—Thou must be a good citizen, or a clever worker, or a moral actor, or a good gratifying son; but the boy must see

(and he surely will see it, if it is felt) that the yearning is that he become *wise in heart*, i. e., a good earnest Christian; and then, on the other hand, that down in the same depths, not with outward expressions of pleasure, but in your very heart; not in your made-up heart, which you keep to show to others, but *in your very self*, the Proverb echoes your feeling,—“**My heart shall rejoice, yea, mine.**” The reduplication intensifies the sense. And, then, unwilling to shake loose from the thought, he pushes it further. “**Yea my very reins shall exult.**” That deepest, firmest, lastest, receptacle of joy, the patient “*reins*;” my very *loins* will “*exult*”—the highest feeling coming from the deepest depths. “**At thy lips:**” the same old Oriental expression for all the conduct of the life. “*At thy lips,*” which are the best expounders of the heart, “**speaking right things.**” The doctrine, therefore, is, that a man will save his child, if he disciplines him with these witnessed tokens of his manifest affection.

But the sketch of them goes on. The tutelage must not only be earnest, but entire:—

¹⁷ Let not thy heart be aglow in sins,
but in the fear of Jehovah all the day.

¹⁷ Let not thine
heart envy sinners:
but be thou in the fear
of the LORD all the day
long.

This is still what Solomon puts in the good father's mouth. All men are “*aglow*” in something. Youth are more “*aglow*” than men of higher age. What men are *aglow* in, they do with more success than they do other things. The difficulty with the Christian is, that he cannot keep *aglow* in piety. You stop a man in any corner of the day, and ask him his errand; and, though he be a Christian, it is probably not a pious errand. His face is all lit up, and his breath hot, and he is at high work; and he is accomplishing for that very cause prodigious amounts; but it is not piety; that is, he is not all *aglow* in conducting his business for his Master. Many would like to be. All find it hard to be; and would be glad to recall Christ, and do all they do as to the Lord. But age drags heavily in such a lesson. The Wise Man implies that the father ought to show that he wishes to seize upon boyhood, to make his son exclusively the Lord's.

How few do this! We let our sons see that we are ambitious other ways. If a father could lift his son, and dip him as Venus did Achilles, yea, submerging his very heel; if he could even let him see he wished it, what an influence! We could cultivate a child in this; to set the Lord always before him (Ps. 16: 8); to level the path of his feet (4: 26); with good will to do service as to God, and not to man (Eph. 6: 7); whether he eat or drink or whatever he do, to do all to God's glory; to make this perpetual; for, really, so doing belongs to our nature, and everything beside is an apostacy. And, therefore, the Proverb claims but a single alternative,—“*Let not thy heart be aglow in sins; but in the fear of Jehovah all the day.*” “*Be aglow;*” sometimes, “*envy*” (E. V.); but expressive of all emotion (see Num. 25: 11, 13). “*Sins;*” generally, “*sinners*” (E. V.); but sometimes *sins* (see Fuerst). With a change of punctuation, always “*sins.*” Not “*be thou in,*” as King James' men build it, by help of Italics; but, most notably, as we have above translated; because, without Italics, the preposition **in** stands ready in both the clauses as required by the verb; and intimates the balance, or the correspondence, in the two expressions. “*All the day.*” One might think that unreasonable. But there are many such expressions in Scripture. “*Pray without ceasing.*” Men are aglow in sins all the day; and why not in holiness? This steady insisting, as the aim of the parent from the very beginning, will save the child, and bring him to the Eternal Kingdom.

Therefore, the good parent will tell him this:—

18 For if there be indeed an hereafter,
then thine expectation shall not be cut off.

18 For surely there
is an end; and thine
expectation shall not
be cut off.

“*Cut off;*” as the worldling's is. The worldling expects it to be “*cut off.*” He toils with a hope, and that so vivid, that he becomes “*aglow*” (v. 17) in worldly earnestness of purpose; and yet, *ab imo*, he knows that it will be “*cut off.*” This is very curious. “*Let not thy heart be aglow in sins;*” because thou knowest that it will be all a bitterness. How can any intellect stand against such appeals? Work for something that will pay: for if thine heart be aglow with Christ, “*thine expectation*”

is eternal; and if there be indeed an hereafter, there is something that shall never be cut off. "An hereafter;" "end" (E. V.). The root of the Hebrew signifies *afterward*. It occurs very often. It is nearly always translated "end" (E. V.) (14; 12; 25: 8). There is no "end" to anybody. There is a long "hereafter." We do not consider Solomon as throwing it in doubt. We do not sympathize with the idea that our rising, under the Old Testament was imperfectly considered. We rather infer the opposite. We incline to the belief that its rare assertion was due to its being so well understood. Not "end" (E. V.), therefore, but "*an hereafter*."

Now, the father has still more put into his mouth. There is a natural eagerness, which the next Proverb labors to express, that the son should take the bit into his own mouth, and run, himself, in the way of immortality. Why wait for the rod? Why even for the tongue? Why wait for time to work her hazardous and procrastinating subduals of the soul? Who ever taught a child, and did not break out often in these more direct appeals? This same Prophet-King labors in Ecclesiastes with this same idea. "Of making many books;" i. e., of putting together whole parchment rolls of these preaching sentences, "there is no end." Preaching is nothing, unless it is as "goads" to prick forward the unwilling ox (Ec. 12: 11). Therefore he breaks out often into the more impatient appeals:—

19 Hear for thyself, my son, and be wise;

and direct thine own heart into the way.

¹⁹ Hear thou, my
son, and be wise, and
guide thine heart in
the way.

"**For thyself**" is the emphatic pronoun. The word "for" is not there. The Hebrew is, "*Hear, thyself*," or "*do thou thyself hear*." The English *idiom* requires the buckram of a particle. The hinging pivot of the verse is this pronoun *thou*. Friends may do ever so much; but in the end it must be "*thyself*." There is an eternal "*way*." It is a "*way*" not for the feet, but for the "*heart*." The "*heart*" has some day to rise up and enter it. Once in, it will never wander any more out. "**My son**," take that critical step. Do thou "*thyself be wise, and direct thine own heart into the way*."

A man has a certain amount of strength; a certain amount of susceptibility, let us call it, in matters of conversion. This one amount impenitence consumes. When all gone, the man has sinned away his day of grace (Heb. 10: 27); and a sin that would do this, *per saltum*, would be, past doubt, the unpardonable sin (1 Jo. 5: 16). Now, the father, in his more immediate entreaties to the child, is to remember this. The child has a store of "flesh," the New Testament calls it, i. e., natural parts, outside of the grace of the Redeemer. This "flesh" is depraved; but this "flesh" is his "talent" for heaven. This "flesh" has in it his conscience. This "flesh" may be worn away. The whole life wears it away; but great sins wear it the fastest. A crime like drunkenness may stand as including the list. A good father, therefore, will hover over the boy, and keep him from wearing away his chance:—

- 20 Be not among wine topers; |
among squanderers of their own flesh. |
20 Be not among
wine-bibbers; among
riotous eaters of flesh.

Before this is pronounced fanciful, let us consult our same writer (Ec. 2: 3). "I tried further with my heart to make drafts upon my flesh with wine, and stimulate my heart in wisdom." Such seems to be the plain meaning. A man grows old by the common use of his faculties; but if he pleases he can travel faster. He can make drafts upon his "flesh" with wine, and burn faster. He can stimulate his heart in wisdom. So a man can seek death under the most moral impenitence. But he can also travel faster. He can *squander his own flesh*. He can do it by drunkenness. He can do it by trains of trespasses, of which common drunkenness may stand as chief. "**Squanderers.**" The verb means to *shake*. It alludes to that *squandering thrill* with which mad vice quivers away its nervous zest. It is true physically; but our great stock in trade is our spiritual nerve and strength; which is that which grace must act upon. Mad sinning thrills it all away. The father will be eager to protect it: "for," says the Wise Man:—

- 21 For the toper and the squanderer shall be |
made poor; |
and slumber shall cover them with rags. |
21 For the drunkard
and the glutton shall
come to poverty; and
drowsiness shall clothe
a man with rags.

“**Poor.**” What poorer than being past grace? “**Slumber.**” What deeper than an impossibility of being ever awaked? “**Cover them;**” literally, “*cover* ;” but the verbs evidently refer to the same substantives.

Five appeals, now, intervene, before Drunkenness steps back upon the stage :—first, to the advantage parents have in their character as parents. They saw life early. They are older. They have, therefore, all the experience :—

- 22 Listen to thy father, as the one that begat thee; and for the very reason that she is old, despise not thy mother.
- 22 Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.

“**As the one that.**” This in the first clause is simply (תְּמַלֵּךְ) *this*. “**Listen to thy father, this** (or some might say, *he*, or *who*) **begat thee.**” “**As the one that**” is more emphatic. It means **because** (see Ps. 74:2; 104:8). In the other clause, if the book were English, we would read it differently. It would imply a **reason for despising**, not for “*not*” **despising**. It would mean, let not thy **mother’s** being “*old*” be a reason for despising her (E. V.) In Hebrew we understand it oppositely. Let thy **mother’s** **being old** be a reason for *not despising* her. The meaning is, that the superiority of parents and their superior age should be a reason why sons should listen.

But, if there should be an influence of parents as parents, how much more of “**truth**” as *truth*. What is the use of parents, or any guide else, if a child will only do justice to “*truth?*” :—

- 23 Buy the truth, and sell it not. It is wisdom, and discipline, and discern-ment.
- 23 Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.

How tantalizing inward “*truth.*” The word is nigh us, and a spark of it would save us. It is the one thing needful. Why talk of anything else? It includes everything. If a man sees “*truth* ;” and that is the same as saying, if a man **SEES**, or **HAS** **LIGHT**, he has faith, and penitence, and diligence, and vigilance, and excellence, and everything beside. As this Proverb says, “**It**

is wisdom, and discipline, and discernment." We do not mean by this, that a man can then repent, and then believe ; but he *has* done it. We do not mean by that, that he must have done it, or he could not have the light; but I mean that the light *is* all these. The "*truth*" of our text let in upon the soul is faith, is penitence, is diligence, is love, is hope, is everything ; let it only be that it is of a moral kind. We do not have light first, and all excellencies afterward; but, in the very flash, we believe, and repent, and adore, and have all the graces of the believer. What a purchase that is ! And the text implies four things ; first, that there is a claim *per se* (what folly to *argue* that a man should "**buy**" truth!) ; second, that there is some clue to it even in the sinner (what folly otherwise to *ask* him to *buy*!) ; third, that he has mad impulses to "**sell** it." What a prodigy ! the *selling* of "*truth*." What possibly could pay for it ? And yet this is the great point of the text ! What need of other appeals, if "*Truth*" itself, with upbraiding eye, is in the market in chains ? And, fourth, how *constantly* we should "**buy**" it ! How eagerly we should press up to her all the time ; and get near to her while we are able ! How mad to have a heart that steadily traffics her ! And how wise to circumvent that heart ; and buy truth, and keep always buying her, and get all we can, as the only conceivable treasure ! "*Is wisdom.*" That is, the bought truth guides. "*And discipline.*" That is, the indwelling of light makes chastisement sanctify ; otherwise it hardens. "*And discernment.*" Other light only serves the eye ; this changes it. One gives the medium of vision ; this gives sight itself. The second appeal, therefore, is to "*truth*" in its own claim.

The third is to that manifested interest, already described (vs. 15, 16), and the fourth, to a common gratitude, that should follow it, and that may be built upon it :—

- 24 The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice ;
and he that begets a wise son shall also have joy in him.
25 Let thy father rejoice, and thy mother ;
and let her that bare thee be glad.
- 24 The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice ; and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him.
- 25 Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice.

"**Greatly rejoice;**" one of those redoubled verbs that express the

intensest meaning (Gen. 2: 17). If thy father's joy is so great (v. 24), learn thine own interest by his (v. 24). And, again, if his joy would be so great, secure it for him (v. 25), as so kind a friend. “**Let thy father rejoice; and let her that bare thee be glad,**” as itself an ingenuous motive.

But, fifthly, a bold appeal,—abdicate thine own will, and come bodily over to thy father's. Impenitence is “**deep**,” and the snare (under the image of the “**Harlot**” v. 26) is so insidious: she “**lies**” so like a bait (v. 28); and traps men so in spite of themselves, that the father, if he be a true father, is to bear down upon the son, and ask him to “**give**” up his own “**heart**,” and to come over bodily, and travel in the father's “**ways**.” The proposal is for an entire abdication:—

- 26 My son, give over thy heart to me ;
and let thine eyes conceive delight in my
ways.
- 27 For the harlot is a deep ditch ;
and the strange woman a narrow pit.
- 28 Yea, she herself, like loot, lies temptingly ;
and increases the robbers among men.

26 My son, give me
thine heart, and let
thine eyes observe my
ways.

27 For a whore is a
deep ditch ; and a
strange woman is a
narrow pit.

28 She also lieth in
wait as for a prey, and
increaseth the trans-
gressors among men.

The idea is, of outrageous and invincible temptation. The proposal is, to give all up; for the young man to *give over his heart*, and not trust it any longer; to give it up to his wiser friend; to give up the thought of baffling impenitence, and come right in to the father's “*ways*.” The word “*conceive delight*,” by a various reading, may mean to *take heed to*, or “*observe*,” as in our English version. Either reading might answer. But ours, which is the ‘*received*,’ answers best; for it implies a new preference. Give over even thine own heart; “*and let thine eyes conceive delight in my ways*” (v. 27). “**For the harlot is a deep ditch.**” Any lower use of this is entirely admissible. The man who would quote the whole as a warning against vice; or who would lecture on the drunken picture below in a discussion of intemperance, would be entirely right; and yet its grand sense is as a portrait of unbelief (see 9: 13; also Class L.) “**Yea, she herself**” (v. 28); i. e., the “*harlot*,” in her own beauty; or Impenitence, in her own blandishments, ‘*like loot*.’ Money lying loose; silks too much exposed;

silver, that any prudent man would hide, lest, as the term goes, it should make thieves; offices, that are left too free, so as to encourage a default; or accounts left too long unaudited; all these things are of the nature of the intended emblem. The fair body of the "Harlot," i. e., the bright charm of Impenitence, "*lies temptingly, or (lit.) in ambush,*" in overwhelming seductiveness, "*like loot,*" "**and increased the robbers among men.**" After the picture of drunkenness (vs. 20, 21, and vs. 29-35), (how mad it is), and this white-limbed "harlot," with her desperate lures, the great text (v. 26) stands clearer, My son, give all up; "*give over thy heart to me;*" see with my eyes, and walk in my steps. Or, as this cannot be without some newness of "delight," "*conceive (that) delight in my ways,*" and surrender the heart even in its interior pleasures.

Solomon next blends all in an universal sketch; for he returns, all at once, to a striking picture of drunkenness. It is a most natural taking off, in itself; containing, among other things, the unconscious accidents, (v. 29), the painless wounds (v. 35), the delirious sights (v. 33), the ruinous quarrels (v. 29), and speeches (v. 33), the dizzy swimming of everything around him (v. 34), and the babbling (v. 29), of the intoxicated man; in one word, the witching pleasures of the cup (v. 31), and its horrors afterward (vs. 32, 33), and yet, the death-like certainty, whatever resolutions intervene, that, when the mad riot is over, the man "**will seek it yet again**" (v. 35). It is a rare picture of intemperance; and yet its higher use in depicting sin, is just as strangely natural. Its griefs and present wretchednesses; its unconscious mischiefs; its bright charms, and strange seductions; its sting like the tooth of an adder; its strange sights and mad speeches; its giddy action without thought, and better thought leading to no action; its grave promise to amend; and yet, when the cup sparkles, its mad rioting again; all these, make it like the "Strange Woman," a graphic portrait of unbelief:—

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>29 Who has woe? Who has wretchedness?
 Who has causes of strife?
 Who has complaining? Who has wounds
 without cause?
 Who has fierceness of eyes?</p> | <p>29 Who hath woe?
 who hath sorrow? who
 hath contentions? who
 hath babbling? who
 hath wounds without
 cause? who hath red-
 ness of eyes?</p> |
|---|---|

- 30 They who are late over wine ;
they who go in for being curious in mixed drink.
- 31 Look not upon wine because it is red ;
because it shows its bead in the cup ;
because it goes right well.
- 32 As its after effect, it bites like a serpent,
and stings like an adder.
- 33 Thine eyes see strange things ;
and thine heart speaks subversive things.
- 34 And thou dost become like one lying in
the open sea ;
or like one lying at the mast head.
- 35 They have beaten me, and I felt no pain ;
they have struck me ; I knew nothing.
When I awake, I will seek it yet again.

30 They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixed wine.

31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright :

32 At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.

33 Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things :

34 Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.

35 They have stricken me, shall thou say, and I was not sick ; they have beaten me, and I felt it not : when shall I awake ? I will seek it yet again.

“Causes of strife;” the expressive י again. It would be curious to find out how many causes before our courts originate in bad bargains, or bad actions, the result of drunkenness. “Wounds without cause.” Strange there are not more of them. It is a constant wonder that a drunken man carries himself so safely. “Without cause” means, of course, imagined to be without cause, i. e., unconscious. V. 30. “Being curious in;” literally, “searching for.” *Recherchè* is a cognate thought in another language. V. 31. Not “when” (E. V.), but, as the word is in each case, י, “because.” These witching sights are just the reasons why we should not look. “It is red;” literally, “makes itself red.” “Shows its bead;” literally, “gives its eye.” “Goes right well;” literally, “spaziert, (i. e. walks, Hith-pahel) aright.” V. 32. “Its after effect;” literally, “its afterwards.” “Stings;” literally, cleaves, or pierces. One sort of serpent bites ; another darts out a sting, and pierces. V. 33. “Strange things.” This adjective feminine usually means “strange women” (E. V.) ; and the one vice does excite, and rouse the imagery of, the other. But it rouses a vast deal of other imagery. The after-clause balances the more general sense ; and so grand a picture would hardly be perfect, unless the nightmare of the vice, and its delirious horrors, were somewhere

brought into view. Impenitence has such spectre-making terrors at the last. “**Subversive things**,” *overturning things* (2: 12); things perfectly ruinous. The thirty-fourth verse, in the giddy tossing of the sea, and the thirty-fifth verse, in the unconscious hurtlings, and in the mad will to get drunk again, are too evident, either as direct images of the vice, or as sharp sketchings of a wild impenitence, to need anything but a mere translation.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE next verses seem very commonplace. We have repeatedly met such verses, and wondered how they had won a position with Solomon. In themselves we could find no freshness. Could we be confined to themselves, they would be a standing puzzle. But, on reading further, we have found some singular passage, and discovered that the plain one was its preface (see 24: 21, 22). For example, a most extraordinary series begins at verse 7th. Solomon announces that the highest wisdom in the universe is that which has regard to sinners. He states (v. 9) that there is a grand purpose in sin, and that that purpose is the “*Sin Offering*.” He is about to lift to the very heavens some of the fortunes of the transgressor; and seems determined, therefore, as a sort of poising for the flight, to show, nevertheless, the great evil of iniquity:—

- 1 Do not thou get excited about evil men; Be not thou envious
against evil men,
neither desire to be
with them:
- and desire not to be with them.
- 2 For their heart, in its very mutterings, 2 For their heart
studith destruction,
and their lips talk of
mischief.
- mutters out robbery;
and their lips talk trouble.
- 3 By wisdom is a house builded; 3 Through wisdom
is an house builded,
and by understanding
it is establish: 1.
- and by discernment does it cause itself to stand.
- 4 And by knowledge are its chambers filled 4 And by knowledge
shall the chambers be
filled with all precious
and pleasant riches.
- with all precious and pleasant competency.
- 5 A strong man, if wise, is as a power indeed; 5 A wise man is
strong; yea, a man of
knowledge increaseth
strength.
- and a man of knowledge makes strength
really strong.

6 For by helmsmanship thou shalt make thy
war;
and in the greatness of a counsellor there
is safety.

6 For by wise coun-
sel thou shalt make thy
war: and in multitude
of counsellors there is
safety.

The King runs over these preliminary verses to show that sin is really ruinous, and “**wisdom**” the great **house-builder**, and the great bread-getter, among men. It is not unusual with him, intending to utter some striking views, to sober them by plainer ones on the obverse side of the question (24 : 21, 22). Sin is to be spoken of as a source of amazing wonders (vs. 7-9). To make such views safe, and to keep vain minds from running wild with the conception, he writes six Proverbs first, to tell in fresh detail the evil of transgression. “**Do not thou get excited;**” the same word that, in the last chapter (v. 17), we translated, “*be aglow.*” V. 2. “**In its very mutterings mutters out robbery;**” literally, “*muttering (or meditates) robbery.*” The word denotes the instinctive habit; that *murmuring utterance*, which flows moodily from the state within. “*Do not get excited about*” sinners, either enviously or emulously; for their feet run to evil, and they are soon to fall. V. 3. “**By wisdom**” (i. e., *piety*) “**is a house,**” (i. e., *all our interests*) “**builded**” (i. e., *raised from nothing*), “**and by discernment**” (viz., *spiritual discernment*) “**does it cause itself to stand**” (*Hithpahel of stand*) (i. e., *win heaven, and keep it*). v. 4. “**Competency;**” from a word meaning *ease*. v. 5. “**A strong man.**” A common man, a better sort of man, a *strong man*, and a *mortal* or *weak man*, are the four words for man found in the Bible. This is נָבָל, “*a strong man.*” It means a man “*strong*” in a worldly sense. That man, “*if wise, is as a power indeed.*” “*As;*” simply “*in*” (בְּ essentiæ). “*Indeed;*” not verbally expressed. The meaning is, that “*a strong man,*” if not “*wise,*” is not “*strong*” at all; that piety is itself strength; that the stronger a man without it, the weaker he is; that a *strong man*, who is pious, not only becomes strong in that, but strong really by his worldly strength; because piety gives realness to every gift; and “**a man of knowledge;**” meaning, as before, of spiritual light; gives real strength to that which, without, would be only weakness. V. 6. “**Helmsmanship;**” really plural. The root means a *cord*.

The word is often repeated (20 : 18). It does not mean “*good advice*,” but our own pulling aright at the cords of the rudder. It means,—that naked wisdom is far better than weapons of “*war*.”

But though Wisdom is so high, Folly, as opening a path for it, is curiously higher :—

- 7 The wisdoms attaching to a fool are perfect jewels; though he opens not his mouth in the gate.
7 Wisdom is too high for a fool; he openeth not his mouth in the gate.

“**Wisdoms** ;” a *pluralis excellentiae*, translated “*wisdom*” in other parts of the Proverbs (9 : 1). “**Are perfect jewels** ;” a translation the reasons for which are the best possible. The word occurs but thrice times in the Bible; once in Job (28 : 18), translated, “No mention shall be made of *coral*;” once in Ezekiel (27 : 16), translated “*coral* and *agate* ;” and once in this passage, where it ought, in course, to be translated “*coral*” again. But it comes from a root meaning *high*; it means *high things*, in the sense of being *precious*; and having gotten to be applied to “*jewels*,” it means very precious ones. The meaning is, that, though “*wisdom excelleth folly as far as light excelleth darkness* (Ec. 2 : 14; see vs. 1-6), yet that the “*wisdoms* in respect to folly are the highest and most wonderful of any. “**Though** ;” a word not expressed. The grammatical construction seems to be ;—*Wisdoms in respect to the fool, being high jewels, he opens not his mouth in the gate*. This is the stark Hebrew, without any idiomatic help. We put in the word “*though*,” to do more justice to the idiom in its Western dress. We might prefix it to either member. Solomon has been saying, that wisdom is the great builder (8 : 30), and the great enricher (8 : 21); that it makes strength really strong (v. 5), and power more powerful in the history of men. But, now, in a singular connection, wisdom is at its very height; strange to say, in the instance of the “*fool*” himself, it is *a perfect jewel*. Though the fool continues a fool so that “*he opens not his mouth in the gate*;” though the wisdom is not his wisdom; and his folly, as long as it continues, remains the same poor helpless folly; yet the “*wisdoms* in the respect of him “*are perfect jewels*.”

As David says (Ps. 19), "There is no speech nor language; their voice is not heard." "*Though*" evidently would assist the Psalm as it does the Proverb. [*Though*] "there is no speech nor accent; [*though*] their voice is not heard; their line is gone out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world." Correspondingly we are to understand this text from Solomon. "*Though he opens not his mouth in the gate, the wisdoms in respect to the fool are the highest jewels.*" The next verse shows how. *Though*, to pause a moment, let us deal more critically. "*The gate;*" that is, the court where wise men sit for counsel. The fool is no wise man, but the wisdom concerned for him is a very jewel. "*Too high for*" (E. V.). This is the favorite sense of all commentators. And, yet, very unreasonably. The word means "*high*," but only *in radice*. In *use* it means "*jewels*." And yet, meaning "*high*" or "*high things*," it could not mean "*too high for*," because that requires a יְהָוָה, and the word is לֹא. *In respect of* is the true translation of the particle. It might equally mean "*the wisdoms attaching to a fool*," i. e., the wise things they become accessory to, as Judas did to the crucifixion of his Master.

The main drift, however, is clearly seen in the verse that follows:—

- 8 Though he thinks to do evil,
men might call him a very master of de- | 8 He, that deviseth
vices. | to do evil shall be called a mischievous per-
son.

"Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). "**Though he thinks;**" literally, *thinking, meditating*. Conceiving "*to do evil*," the fool, i. e., the impenitent, **may be called a very master of devices**. In chap. 16:10 we read,—"*There is a divination on the lips of the king.*" Why? We explained it at the time. He may be a fool. He may be a brute. He may be an idiot. He may hardly know what he thinks. Yet his voice is so potent as a king, that he is not allowed to say anything that does not answer to an end. There is a divination with him. And so of the meanest insect. It never "*transgresses*" (see 16:10).

Hence here:—The fool “opens not his mouth in the gate,” and yet, in the Plan built upon him, and, we may say, occasioned by him, *he may be called “a very master of devices.”* That Plan is the most amazing in the universe; and so, unconsciously, he has dug the highest jewel. “**Men** might call him,” literally, “*they* might call him” (impersonal).

Verse ninth uncovers everything:—

- 9 The design of folly is the Sin-Offering; | ^{9. The thought of}
and the abomination, in the case of man, is | foolishness is sin; and
the scorner. | the scorner is an ab-
omination to men.

“**Design;**” not the same word as in the last verse. That word has *ν* before it. This word is without it. This word oftener means *iniquity* (Lev. 18:17). This word might mean “*iniquity*” here; and still make sense. “*The iniquity of folly is the Sin-Offering.*” Then it would suggest Christ’s speech,—“If I had not done, etc.” (Jo. 15:24); and the Comforter’s *de-lictus flagrans*,—“Of sin, because they believe not on me” (Jo. 16:9). It would mean, that the direct infamy of sin appears in wake of the Sin-Offering. And it would accord finely with the closing clause of the verse, which would but echo it,—“**The abomination in the case of man is the scorner.**” All things considered, however, it cannot be the meaning. (1) “*Devices,*” in the verse before it, never means *iniquity*. The association of the two suggests similarity of sense. Again (2), *iniquity* is a more distant sense, and, though more frequent, of less claim, as farther from the root. Besides (3), the sense as above translated is unspeakably better. “**Sin-Offering;**” primarily *sin*. And yet it is a singular mistake, that everybody seems to fall into, that translating it “*the Sin-Offering*” is a strained and bold expedient. On the contrary, it hardly means *sin* in any part of the Old Testament. It means “*the sin-offering*” all through the book of Leviticus. It means it in much of this book (see 13:6). It read “*sin-offering*” in nearly all the ceremonial law. Rooted in the Israelitish mind, there was nothing strained or fanciful; and when Paul said,—He hath made Him to be *sin* for us who knew no *sin*,” he was recurring to a sense which was familiar in the synagogue every Sabbath-day. “*De-*

sign ;" subject to the same play as the English word *design*. We say, '*design* of a knife,' or '*design* of a speaker.' The sense is totally different. The sense, however, is nearly akin. "*The design of folly*" as a scheme of the fool himself, is any insane madness; for he is a born fool, and "*opens not his mouth in the gate*" (v. 7); but in the other sense it is like the "*divination on the lips*" of the brute king (see 16:10), it is the *highest jewel* (v. 7). It stands as the star of the universe. *He mutters rapacity* (see v. 2); and yet, *conceiving "to do evil, men might call him a very master of devices"* (v. 8). The meaning is, that the gospel is a high gem (v. 7) made possible by sin; and the closing clause finishes the picture. If Christ is a higher chance for life than even Gabriel had, then sin cannot hurt the sinner except through *scorning*. We have had this idea before (17:11). "*Only the rebellious,*" the Psalmist words it (Ps. 68:6). "*Only his enemies,*" he words it in another place. The fool is a perfect "*master of devices*" in that startling scheme which his case inauguates; for *the design of foolishness is the Sin-offering*. And, now, nothing can hurt him in his folly, if only he is not rebellious. "*The abomination*" for the fool is in his character as "*scorner*."

Therefore comes the next verse:—

10 If thou hast been remiss in the day of nar-¹⁰ | *If thou faint in*
row trial, | *the day of adversity,*
still narrower has become thy strength. | *thy strength is small.*

Solomon delights in these past tenses. The whole sense is this:—Sin has afforded a chance for a perfect jewel of wisdoms (v. 7). It is to be set on the brow of eternity. And yet there comes a "**day**" in that immensity, when this jewel must be won or lost. It is this of which the Proverb speaks. And he throws all into the past tense. If, at any point in mature life, you are without the gem, it is a sign of a great blunder. You have been "**remiss in the day of**" straitness; and, as the fruit of each instance of this, you have *straitened, or narrowed in, your "strength."* Eternal life is a glory, past thought; but the hour for taking it is one of amazing **narrowness**. The fingers that must take it are nightmared by a strange torpor. And each time you do not take it, the strength on which grace is poured, and which

makes you susceptible of life, is narrowed in. All this is in the past tense. At any given point in the history of life, if you are without salvation, it is a sign you have been relaxed in days of crisis, and that each time your "*strength*" has decayed away. "**If;**" a conjunction understood, and not expressed; as we would say in our English idiom, *Hast thou been relaxed, etc., then thy strength has been narrowed in.*

But more:—

11 If thou forbearest to snatch them that are laid hold of for death,

and them that are tottering to the slaughter;

12 because thou sayest,—Behold we have not

the knowledge:

as to this, is there not One weighing out hearts? He has the discernment:

and One watching thy soul? He has the knowledge;

and He will render to man according to his works.

11 If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain:

12 If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?

Full as this passage is, it scarce needs comment at all. In that day of crisis, when the gem is to be won (v. 10), "if thou forbearest to snatch them that are laid hold of for death" (and in these thou must include thyself as well as others), the Wise Man states consequences with the most theologic care. "*Snatch;*" a primary sense, corresponding very well with the days of straitness (v. 10), and the idea of rough violence (21: 22) to get heaven, if we get it at all. "*Tottering;*" the undecided, dazed and helpless gait of the unbeliever. V. 12. "**Because;**" giving the reason why thou mayest *forbear*. "**We;**" i. e., thyself and others, as we explained in the last verse. "**Because thou sayest, Behold we have not the knowledge.**" This is a most artistic putting of the difficulty. "*Knowledge*" saves a man (22: 19). "*Knowledge*" is the same as piety; it is that "*heart*" which the lost man is without (10: 21); and which belongs to the puzzle, chap. 17: 16. The lost man very naturally pleads that he is without a certain mysterious *knowing*, or *light* (Is. 5: 19); and that, without that, he cannot turn a wheel in the process of salvation. But, says the inspired man,—"**As to this, is there not One weighing out hearts?**"

"Hearts;" the very thing pronounced wanting. Do not say "We have no knowledge." It is because of this that there is One weighing it out. Not "pondereth" (E. V.); not "weigheth" (Zöckler); but "is weighing out," a sense helpful to other Proverbs (see remarks 16:2; 21:2). The word is not a frequent one, and is always with this *meting out* sense (see 2 Ki. 12:12). "He has the discernment." Do not say, "We have not the knowledge;" for God "has the knowledge;" and God "has the discernment;" and, in this very view, he *weights out the hearts*, i. e., gives the "discernment," and gives the "knowledge," and actually tells the rule by which He *weights out hearts*, and thereby doles "the knowledge" and grades "the discernment" necessary to salvation. This rule will hold at the Judgment. We shall be enlightened still according to our works (Rev. 20:13). But it is a strange rule! Light begets works, and works, it will ever appear, grade the access of our light. That seems a circle. But, circle or not, one thing we understand,—not to wait for the Almighty. To do so is the doom of the curst. Isaiah has that much twenty-six centuries ago (Is. 5:19). Grace begins everything, no doubt. But as an absolute consciousness, we may start after grace. There is nothing in the graciousness of Heaven to delay our resort to it and feeling after it (Acts 17:27). And God who "has the knowledge," weighs it out; but, beyond a doubt, the very weights in the bag deliver it in proportion to our work.

As the great breaking-over act to "knowledge" as from no "knowledge" (v. 12), and so to life as from death, we are to treat "knowledge," not selfishly (21:17), but so as to get a taste for it, and to learn to affect it because it is good in itself. A man can never be saved by selfishness (21:26), nor driven all the way by Sinai's thunders. It is right to be moved by fear; but not sufficient. The talent that God must impart is one of appetite. So, if we seek wisdom, we must ask a taste for it. For, after all, a taste for wisdom is the very essence of the soul's regenerateness:—

13 Eat honey, my son, because it is good,
and the droppings, as sweet upon thy
palate.

13 My son, eat thou
honey, because it is
good; and the honey-
comb, which is sweet
to thy taste:

- 14 So shall the knowledge of wisdom be to thy soul.
 If thou hast found it, and there be a hereafter,
 then thine expectation shall not be cut off.
- 14 So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.

“**Thine expectation.**” Behold, after all, self as well as sentiment. Solomon never divorces them (21:20, 21). But self must follow sentiment. Solomon carefully distinguishes them. We cannot win heaven for self (21:17), but we can win self with heaven (21:20). The toil for an “*expectation*” all Scripture has constantly said (Matt. 16:25) must always be in vain. But “*if thou hast found knowledge*,” and loved her in her heavenly grace; broken over the gulf; and wooed, and won, this offered gift; if thou hast not *relaxed in the day of straitness* (v. 10), but hast pressed in with loving eyes, and begged for a spiritual appetite; and that God would *weigh out heart* (v. 12), and give you the divine affection which He shares (v. 12); then two things follow; first, a joyful sweetness, such that thou shalt “*eat because it is good*;” and second, all self could ask; for, Lo! “*if there be a hereafter; then thine expectation shall not be cut off.*” Recurring, in brief, upon the thought, mark four things. First,—“**Honey**” is “*good*.” So is “*knowledge* ;” and cannot be good except in itself. Second,—We are to “*eat honey* ;” and so “*knowledge* ;” and cannot “*eat*” of it except “*because it is good*.” Third,—We have eaten wisdom because it was good; else, as the last thought implies, we have never eaten of it at all. This is a grand anti-communion text. And, fourth,—We had better eat of it; not only because of the whole sweetness of the feast, but of all else added; “*If there be, etc.*” “**Palate** ;” a juster word than the English, meaning the hinder mouth, and all the organs of taste. “**To thy soul** ;” we might translate, “*to thine appetite*” “**Then** ;” simply “*and* ;” a force of *and*, however, which is not infrequent in the closing member of a sentence (14:22).

These additional joys, which are promised to the saved, are so abiding that it is useless to attack him. The next Proverb, therefore, is most bright for the saint, and, at the same time, most solemn for the sinner:—

- 15 Lie not in wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous.
 Rob not his resting-place.
- 16 For the righteous man shall fall seven times, and rise again; while the wicked shall be overthrown as an evil.
- 15 Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; spoil not his resting-place:
 16 For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again; but the wicked shall fall into mischief.

"**As an evil;**" literally, "*in an evil.*" "*The wicked shall fall into mischief*" is the insipid translation of the English Version. A good way of treating such renderings is to insist *ad unguem* upon something worthy of Solomon, which such truisms can be declared to mean. Treating the preposition as **in essentia**, and adding to a list (Class XXVI) which we shall collect in the appendix to our volume, we reach the clear meaning that the Christian is invulnerable; that though he "**fall**," he shall "**rise again**" (Ps. 37:24); that all evil shall do him good (Rom. 8:28); that no evil shall befall him (12:21); and that no good shall be denied him (Ps. 84:11); but that, as to the impenitent, creation cannot bear a mere blot, and "**he shall be overthrown as an evil.**"

While on the subject of not harming the saint, the lesson is added of not harming anybody, and not cherishing resentment. It may be necessary to punish. It may be necessary to defend. It may be necessary to inflict; and that, indeed, the very uttermost degrees of mischief. But it is never necessary to "**exult**," or to avenge an injury:—

- 17 Rejoice not at the fall of thine enemy; and let not thy heart exult at his overthrow;
 18 lest Jehovah see, and it be evil in His eyes; and He recall His anger from him.
- 17 Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth; and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth;
 18 Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.

There might seem to be an inconsistency in the four clauses as a whole. "**Rejoice not at the fall of thine enemy**" (v. 17) "**lest Jehovah recall His anger**" (v. 18). What would that matter? If there be no hypocrisy in the saint, and he dare not be glad of the fall, why object to the "*recall*" of "*anger*"? Is there not some defect in this sentence?—On the contrary, it is

one of the instances of clearly discriminated thought. My enemy crushes me. I cry out under my load, and God sweeps him away. I cannot but feel relieved. There is a vast difference between this, and anything like joy at his sufferings. I may not wish him restored. I dare not have him back. But I must not unfeelingly "exult." And there is no inconsistency in the menace, that revengefully to exult shall set up and bring back the destructive tyranny.

Accordingly, we are to be very discriminating in our feelings, even against "the wicked." And there is to be a remembering of the grounds for pity :—

- 19 Be not angry against evil doers ;
be not excited ^{at} the wicked ;
20 for there comes no future for the evil man ;
the light of the wicked shall be put out.

¹⁹ Fret not thyself
because of evil men,
neither be thou envious
at the wicked :
²⁰ For there shall be
no reward to the evil
man; the candle of the
wicked shall be put out.

Doctrines that Solomon has broached (see 1 : 24-28) should evidently soften our wrathfulness. "The rich and the poor fit together" (22 : 2). "The borrower is the servant of the lender" (22 : 7). God is to give men for us (Is. 43 : 4). If we are set up over the ruins of the dead, Oh, how tender we should be ! For there will never come a "future" for the wicked. The candle for the lost but gleams in his earthly dwelling-place. "Be not excited ;" be not "emulous" (v. 1); be not "jealous" (Num. 5 : 14); be not "aglow" (23 : 17). This word is most wonderfully varied. It can have no one translation. It means "excited" in almost any way. Here, that word seems decidedly the best. Be not moved by their sins, or by their successes. For, poor men, they are not objects to be envied. "There comes no future for the evil man. The light of the wicked shall be put out." "Comes ;" the word *to be*, actually expressed (see Gen. 1 : 5). "Future ;" literally, *after part* (Is. 2 : 2); bare derivative from the preposition *after*; with no right to be translated "end" (see 5 : 4, *et al.*, E. V.), or "reward" (E. V.), as in the present instance. "The light ;" sometimes translated "lamp" (1 Sam. 3 : 3, E. V.); less permanent than נֵר; not luminous in itself; but dying, unless trimmed and artificially replenished.

There follows a very uncommon teaching. While we are not to be revengeful with the workers of iniquity, or joyful over their just misfortunes, we are not to patronize God, or make false excuses for His character. To guard everything, commonplace is first resorted to, as in the preface so recently discussed (vs. 1-6), to fix firin the more obvious truth, before disturbing it by more startling intimations:—

- 21 Fear Jehovah, my son, and the King.
With them given to change have thou
nothing to do.
- 22 For Their heavy inflictions shall come sud-
denly;
and the destruction by the Two, who is
there that knows?
- 21 My son, fear thou
the Lord and the king;
and meddle not with
them that are given to
change:
22 For their calamity
shall rise suddenly;
and who knoweth the
ruin of them both?

“**And the King;**” viz., *God*. This may seem a very wonderful rendering. But we shall recur to the very like a few verses ahead (25:2). “**Jehovah;**” i. e., God in all His perfections. “**The King;**” i. e., God in that strange work in which He disciplines and governs. Not *Jehovah, even the King*; for that would preclude the words “*Them both*” (E. V.), or “**the Two**” in the twenty-second verse; but, as in chap. 25:2, “*Je-hovah*,” as a God of Love (1 Jo. 4:8), and in all His grander perfections; “*and the King*,” as though viewed for a moment quite as a separate Being. The direction (vs. 21, 22) is a starting point (vs. 1-6), as though to bring out more sharply another and more strange monition (vs. 23, etc.). The common-place law must be unquestioned. “**Fear**” God. There can be no doubt about that. “**Fear**” Him as God. Fear Him as “**King.**” Fear Him in all His relations. There are innovators; caught by new objections; “**given to change;**” literally, *repeaters*, or *turners back*, like the *year* (from the same root, see Gesen.). “**Have thou nothing to do**” with them. “*Be not angry with them,*” the last passage says (v. 19); and yet, “*have nothing to do*” with them. “**For Their heavy inflictions;**” i. e., Jehovah’s and the King’s. The noun means *weights*, or *crushings*. *Their crushings*; not the victims’, but God’s. We talk with like licence in English. A man’s crushing may mean where he crushes, or where he gets crushed. Of course it can only mean where They crush,

if it alludes to God and the King (comp. Ps. 38: 11, marg. and 39: 10). “*Come* ;” literally, *rise or stand up*. “*Suddenly* ;” because that is best. “*Jehovah*,” as a God of love, and “*the King*,” as a God of justice, may go on very smoothly with the lost for half a century : but keep thou clear! By the very necessities of “*the King*,” the incorrigible must be crushed “*suddenly*.” “*The destruction by the Two* ;” literally, “*of*,” i. e., *the destroying that the Two do*. As a paraphrase of the whole passage,—Take the tenderness of the Being Jehovah, and add to all of that the strictness necessary to a King; make Jehovah a God of goodness, but then, loving as He is, by needs of that also a reigning King; and we have a terrible prospect for the sinner. By all means “*fear*” Him. Because of the Two together, most gloriously the God “*Jehovah*,” but most necessarily a God “*the King*,” in the needful sternness of Their administration, *who knows the ruin by Them Both?*

Then, now, this adjusted, the strange principle is at once advanced :—

23 Even as to These, for the wise
to be partial in judgment is not good.

23 These things also
belong to the wise. It
is not good to have
respect of persons in
judgment.

“*Even as to These* ;” that is “*Jehovah*” and “*the King*,” (v. 21). For the pious to defend God with unprincipled strokes of reasoning, the Proverb says, “*is not good*.” How fine a thought for learned theologians! In the appetite for “*change*,” arguments are brought against the teachings of Jehovah, that are new and hard to battle with. The saint, instead of keeping his “*vineyard*” clean (v. 30), and going into the jungle with toil, and cutting out the thorns and briars (v. 27), rests idly like a sluggard (v. 30), and speaks lyingly for Jehovah. How many words in His defence are utterly disingenuous. Now, the world sees this; and when gospel apologetics say,—black is white, and sin is holiness, “**nations curse, and peoples treat with indignation**” (v. 24). Yea, *they that rebuke such things are cheered, and there comes upon them even the blessing of the good* (v. 25). This is the main gist of this remarkable passage. Nor need we shrink from it; for Job pilloried this

hypocritical jugglery before :—“ Will ye speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for Him? Will ye be partial for Him? Will ye contend for God? Is it good, because He searches you through? As one deceives a mortal, can ye so deceive Him? He will surely reprove you if ye are covertly partial ” (Job 13:7-10). Defending God, therefore, by becoming “ patchers up of falsehood,” as Job calls it (Job 13:4), “ sewers together of nothing,” Solomon distinctly rebukes; with how much necessity may be judged by those who carefully read the writings of most polemics. “ *Even as to These.*” There is no “ *as to.*” This must be understood by the isolation of the substantive (see other cases, Class XIII). “ *These*” has always been referred to the subsequent Proverbs; so as to mark a new collection. Chap. 25:1 might support that. The opinion of all expositors upholds it. But then let us press the following questions:—In the first place, What motive could there be, in a collection by Solomon, to interpose the expression,—“ *Also these?*” Two renderings could be had:—Either first, “ *These things also belong to the wise*” (E. V.); or, “ *Also these:—For the wise to have respect, etc.*” Where is the good of such an interruption? But, in the second place,—What is the meaning of the Proverb with such a preface cut off? It would be a bare inanity. “ *To respect persons!*” Who doubts whether this is “ *wise?*” In the third place, rendered as above, it is perfectly fresh: it gives emphasis to all the words; unity to all the passage; force to each separate text, when they would be nullities if they stood alone; and, on the whole, brings forward such a continuous significance as touches upon other Proverbs, and could hardly have been invented, and could certainly have fallen by chance into no such intelligible connection. “ *Also these*” (chap. 25:1) may mean something different, just as like words may mean differently in any Scripture (see 24:12). “ **For the wise to be;**” literally, “ *In the instance of (ȝ) the wise, to be, etc.*” “ **To be partial;**” literally, “ *to recognize faces.*” “ **In judgment;**” literally, *in a judicial verdict.* Here that “ *judgment*” is meant which a man comes to about his Maker.

This untrue verdict for God, which, *quoad hoc*, is saying “ **to**

the wicked,—Thou art righteous,” is one which men in mass will resent:—

- 24 Him that says to the wicked,—Thou art righteous,
nations shall curse, peoples shall treat with indignation. | 24 He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him:

God, so defended, is not really holy, but unholy. He is a figment; and men some day will find Him out. Such Gods have done unspeakable mischief. They are “*wicked*.” And he that says they are “*righteous*” must some day or other go down.

Nay, the sooner the better; and he that administers the reproof will deserve a “*blessing*”:—

- 25 And to them that set the thing right it shall be pleasant;
and upon them shall come the blessing of the good man. | 25 But to them that rebuke him shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them.

“**To them that set the thing right;**” simply 3 with the particle of a verb meaning to *set right*. It often means to *reprove*. *What* is set right is very evident. We throw in the word “*thing*” with nothing to answer to it in the original. “**Pleasant.**” Not very seldom in this world old arguments are now proved to be unsound, which it would have been anything else than “*pleasant*” to have made a thrust at years ago. “**And upon them;**” i.e. upon those who shake to pieces the very defences of the gospel, when these become tricky—when they are unprincipled, “**shall come,**” *quoad* this act, if they are not otherwise its foes, “**the blessing of the good man.**”

He that deals in things absolutely true, need not be afraid, even though they may seem to be against the gospel. Nor need he be afraid of having no sympathy. He will meet with the truth in others. He will be the man to get sympathy. There can be no harmony of lie with lie:—

- 26 He kisses lips,
who returns straight-forward words. | 26 Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer.

“**Kisses;**” (future; *ergo* continuous present): meets other

spirits; comes into harmony with all intelligence. “**Straight-forward**;” from a verb meaning *to be in front*. Of all beings God ought to be defended, not by lies, but by what is *straight out*. He is a bad man, though it may be in the higher chambers of his character, who talks wickedly for God, and who lets pass under his pen (unless through febleness of wit), flimsy and uncandid argumentations.

Because, nextly, there is a remedy for want of argument. If time creates cavils, and new sciences offer new difficulties, what is our recourse? To make light darkness? To take scientific facts, and make conscience tramp them under foot? *Nations curse that*; peoples will be roused indignantly. We are to do just what the farmer does when brambles spring up. We are to go to “**work**.” Fresh thorny difficulties are the nettles (v. 31) of our spiritual husbandry. We are to drive in a deep plow:—

- 27 Do up thy work without;
and adjust it for thyself in the field.
Then thou hast also already built thy house.

²⁷ Prepare thy work
without, and make it
fit for thyself in the
field; and afterwards
build thine house.

What is the farmer meant for but to chop the weeds? If we could plow-in exploded errors, our husbandry would be a very simple one: but we are to deal with a new crop; and in that soil of Palestine (see Hackett; *Illustrations of Scripture*) thorns had a strange secundity. “Thorns are snares in the way of the crooked” (22: 5); but to the Christian they are a necessity. They keep him at “**work**” in his “**field**;” and, after all, what else has he to do? When he has ploughed up the brambles, and put in the good seed of truth, he may stop and rest. “[He has] already built [his] house.” “**House** ;” *every interest* (see Ex. 1: 21). “**Hast built** ;” emphatic perfect. After an interval for a lesser thought, the claims of this honest husbandry are to be resumed (vs. 30-34).

While we are not to defend God unfairly, we are not to assail men even fairly:—

- 28 Be not a witness to no purpose against thy neighbor,
and, mayhap, deceive with thy lips.

²⁸ Be not a witness
against thy neighbour
without cause; and de-
ceive not with thy lips.

“**To no purpose** ;” “*without cause* ” (E. V.). The same wrong

translation is scattered about wearisomely (1 : 11 ; 3 : 30). In this verse it spoils all the sense. “Without cause” would imply that we may “witness” if there be a “cause.” Whereas the other rendering is not only good morals, but all that can be enacted in the case. No definition can replace it. Scandal is not lying, but *useless* defaming. We are not to tell the truth “against [our] neighbor,” except for good; and so, plainly, we are to understand the Proverb,—“Be not witness to no purpose.” “**Mayhap.**” This is expressed by a little particle before the verb. It helps in the ancillary thought, that, not only is speaking evil wicked if it can do no good, but also it may prove actually unjust. All statement has a hazard of mistake. If it can do some good, we may risk something so as to “witness” in a case; but if there can be no good, we should risk nothing. If we speak evil without any good result, we not only harm our neighbor, but may wrong him by unintentional deceit. We are to be silent, therefore.

And it is no reason to the contrary that he has borne witness against us:—

- 29** Say not, As he has done to me, so I will do to him;
 I will render back to a man according to his work.
- 29 Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me; I will render to the man according to his work.

The *lex talionis*, which in law, and also in social defence, necessarily exists, is rather defined than at all interfered with by the present passage. בְּזַעַן (*without a purpose*) regulates both sentences. We are never to retaliate, except as in witnessing in a court; and then, not resentfully, but as for a useful aim.

Clearing away this, however, Solomon resumes:—

- 30** I came upon the field of the slothful,
 and upon the vineyard of the man wanting heart;
- 31** and lo! it was all grown up with nettles;
 brambles covered its face;
 and the wall, as to its stones, was pulled down.
- 32** And I looked for my own sake; I applied my heart;
 I saw; I received correction.
- 30 I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding.
- 31 And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone-wall thereto was broken down.
- 32 Then I saw, and considered it well; I looked upon it, and received instruction.

- 33 A little sleep ! A little drowsing !
 A little folding of the hands for rest !
- 34 and thy poverty, sauntering along, has entered ;
 and thy want, as a bucklered man.
- 33 Yet a little sleep,
a little slumber, a little
folding of the hands to
sleep.
- 34 So shall thy poverty come as one that
travelleth ; and thy
want as an armed man.

Of course, these are Proverbs; and good for anything for which they can afford a lesson. They are like the “*balance*” sentences (11:1; 16:11), or the “*surety*” sentences (6:1; 11:15), or the “*abomination*” sentences (3:32; 11:20), good wherever they can be applied. This is a picture of sloth. At the same time, in its connection, it is a picture of sloth under attacks upon our faith. The world moves on; and, in our laziness, our garden gets all choked with new dogmas against the gospel. The writer has already said that we are not to bear with them; we are not to yield to “them that are given to change” (v. 21). He has also said, we are not to answer them with deceit (v. 23): and, now, what remains? Why, that we baffle them; that we work as hard as they do. I know no Proverb more useful for the men of our times. We lie upon our lees, till we think philosophy a sort of wickedness; till we think quiet under its advances a sort of Christian faith. We let science work on till, by sap and mine, it is near our citadel. Great bodies of learned work are built up, while the church sleeps. If she fights, it is with a sort of chicane (vs. 23, 24); with the gongs and bright paper, like a Chinese troop; when duty plainly is, to work up abreast of science. If the church has more light, she must expect more contest. If she has better arms, she must expect more battles; with more mind—of course, more to oppose; otherwise, she has less to do than less capable believers. The world’s science must be met by the church’s science; and new sturdy brambles in her prolific fields must be plowed under by improved implements. Otherwise, old-time arguments, and a sort of a chicane of a retort; responses like those of women, rather intended to say,—‘No,’ than to be an actual reply, become indicative of a sluggish-church, and of a garden cumbered like that before us. V. 30. “**Slothful**;” literally, *sluggard man*. “*Man*” here is פָּנָס; in the last clause, בְּנָס. The better off man has a “**field**,” the commoner one, a “**vineyard**.” All classes

of men are bound to read up, and get rid of occasions of cavil. “**Wanting heart.**” So, “weighing out hearts” (21:2), and increasing heart (15:32); “*heart*” in many of these texts meaning *sanctified mind*, or *piety*. V. 31. “**The wall;**” necessary to keep a church at all. Let scientists trample in upon the vineyard with nothing but a few old clothes to scare them, and presently we will have no church whatever. The church must work with the best. Not “*stone wall*” (E. V.), but “**the wall, as to its stones.**” “**Pulled down.**” It will not slowly crumble; but interested parties will help it, when it begins to totter. In fact, the world pulls off stones from the very first. V. 32. “**Looked.**” Seeing such things requires an effort. “**For my own sake;**” literally, “*I,*” expressed, and, therefore, emphatic. Not the slothful man’s business alone! but mine! I am sufficiently like him. A vineyard with brambles like that of Geneva, or like that of England, or of cis-Atlantic Socinian States, is a picture for all mankind. Sturdy brambles, dug at chiefly with chicane, adorn the gardens of almost every one of us. V. 33. “**Drowsing;**” literally, *nodding*; from בָּגַד, to *shake*. The church cannot afford even to *nap* an instant. V. 34. “**Sauntering along;**” Hithpael of *walk*: *spazieren* (20:7); *easy, pleasure gait.* “**Bucklered man.**” Both these descriptions mean (1) *slowness* and (2) *certainty*; (1) unobserved ease of gait; but (2) doom-like certainty in coming. A church that enjoys her ease may supereminently prosper. Her foe may be behind the hill, and her doom may be “*sauntering*” noiselessly up; but their coming is as certain as the dawn. If any church becomes bloated, and fights with empty cartridges; if her piety gets retired into scoff, and into mere virtuous indignation; if she thinks less than the world, and writes with less purity and truth than her arch assailants; then we have the beginning of the end. The “woman” (see Class L) has hid her leaven so effectually that “the whole” is beginning to be leavened (Matt. 13:33). “**A little sleep!** **A little nodding!** **A little folding of the hands for rest!** **And [her] poverty, sauntering along, has entered, and [her] want as a bucklered man.**” “*Has entered;*” emphatic perfect. “*A little sleep*” more! and the thing has actually been achieved.

CHAPTER XXV.

We are half tempted to translate again, "*Also as to these*," viz., "*Jehovah*" and "*the King*" (24:21), "**are Proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah, King of Judah, preserved.**" We are tempted, because the same subject goes right forward in the chapter. On the whole, however, "**these**" *Proverbs* seem the thing intended:—

- 1 ALSO these are Proverbs of Solomon | THESE are also pro-
which the men of Hezekiah, King of Ju-| verbs of Solomon,
dah, preserved. | which the men of Heze-
kiah king of Judah
copied out.

"*Preserved*;" Hiphil; the Kal meaning to *grow old*. If a man takes a Proverb, and records it, he *gives it age*, or *causes it to grow old*. The word has various meanings. Making an encampment old (Gen. 12:8) means changing it, taking it to a new place. Hence the idea of transferring, which men have attached to this very passage;—which Hezekiah's men "*copied*" (E. V.), or *transferred*. It makes little difference how the idiom travelled round.

- 2 It is the glory of Gods to cover over a | 2. It is the glory of
thing, | God to conceal a thing:
but the glory of Kings to search a thing | but the honor of kings
out. | is to search out a mat-
ter.

"**Gods**;" a word in the Hebrew rarely singular. We doubted whether not to translate, "*God*," as usual, but chose the plural, to balance "Kings" (2d clause), and to indicate the meaning. We hesitated whether not to write, "*a God*." "*It is the glory of a God to cover over a thing, and the glory of Kings to ferret out a matter.*" It makes little difference. To a Hebrew eye it was always plural. Some make it the *pluralis excellentiae*; some think it indicates the Trinity. Here, there is intended the same distinction as in verse twenty-first of the last chapter. "**The glory of Gods**" is to pardon. "**The glory of Kings**" is inquisitorially to punish. The meaning is strangely beautiful. "*The glory of God*" is that He is a God of love. Fury is His

strange act (Is. 27 : 4). His highest perfections "glory" in redemption. But He is also King. He has not only the shorter track of immediate compassion, but the eternal road of the welfare of the universe. This last makes His counsels deep (see v. 3). The meaning of the passage is, that it is the glory of God to forgive; **רְפַטָּה**, that is, to *hide* or *cover up*. This is His grand attribute. He does not desire to damn us. "He willeth not the death of the sinner, but that all should turn and live" (see 1 Tim. 2 : 4). Preeminently, then, it is God's to pardon. But He is also a King. The necessities of an old universe lead Him; we know not whither. Hence the second clause. "**To search out;**" literally, *to bore*. Were He simply God, i. e., God without the necessities of control, He would pardon everybody; but He is also King; and His desires for holiness go into the utmost scrutinies of strict administration.

Where that must lead no mortal dreams:—

- 3 The heavens, as to height, and the earth,
as to depth,
and the heart of Kings there is no search-
ing.
³ The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable.

Thrown into an easy involution, the grammar would be thus;—*There is no search as to the heavens in respect to height, and as to the earth in respect to depth, and as to the heart of Kings.* And the meaning is this,—*There is no searching* the height or the depth of the King's heart, any more than the height of heaven or the depth of the earth (which in those unastronomic days meant blankly not at all). Give God a universe to rule; and what He must do, in that great compass, as a King, is quite unsearchable. This is a splendid subsoiling of at least one of the nettle banks (24 : 31) in the believer's vineyard. "**Search-ing;**" the same word as in the verse before it; intentionally, we have no doubt. If the King *searches* into an offender, it is idle for us to have any cavil, unless we, on our part, can *search*; and that, into His eternal Kingship.

The Wise Man does this, but in a gleam at best, and at most in but one particular:—

- 4 Try dross from silver,
and there comes forth a vessel for the finer.
5 Try the wicked before the King,
and His throne is set firm in righteousness.

⁴ Take away the
dross from the silver,
and there shall come
forth a vessel for the
finer.

⁵ Take away the
wicked ~~from~~ before the
king, and his throne
shall be established in
righteousness.

This is a key to Providence. It is worthy of the fame of Solomon. The mystery of mysteries is evil. The sum of all puzzles is, how it won foothold under Jehovah. Men are pressing *science* most, just in our day ; but the fiercest gales that rack the timbers of the truth have blown from that course, viz., the “*Origin of evil*.” “**Try.**” This is a difficult word. In the first place, (lexically) it may be either of two. One means to *drive*. The other means to *mutter*. From this, passing into other shades, one means to *separate*; the other means to *think*. We are divided between the two. We are inclined to the latter word; and half induced to suppose (Job 37:2), that it refers to the *rumble* of a furnace. We might say, “*Digest away*,” or “*Smelt away*,” or “*Try away*,” but notice one fact.—It does not say (v. 5),—“*Take away the wicked from before the King*” (E. V.); but most pointedly something different. *Digest the dross “from” the silver* (v. 4); and then, varying it,—*Digest the wicked “before” the King* (v. 5). If it were, “*Take away the wicked*,” the question would remain,—Why ever create him? but if it be,—“**Try the wicked**,” it accords with other passages (14:7; Rom. 9:22). There is something in the existence of “*the wicked*;” in their being *tried*; in their being tolerated before the “**throne**;” in their being discovered to themselves; in their being laid bare to the universe; in their being searched into, and their crimes punished; that seems to be necessary to the kingcraft of “**the King**.” It is a clinic in a school of medicine. “God acts that beings may fear before Him” (Ecc. 3:14): so said Solomon on another occasion. And if He does this in all His wider Providences, why should He shrink from it in the picture of our text? “*Try dross from silver, and there comes forth a vessel for the finer. Try the wicked before the King;*” for what? Why, for just what Solomon declared:—“that beings may fear before Him;” or, in more figurative

dress,—that “*His throne*” (i. e., His influence as a King) may be “*set firm in righteousness*.”

As this is the very object of the King; viz., to “*try*,” or thoroughly to *digest*, the creature; then, though as God happy to forgive, yet, if as King (v. 2) certain to *search out*, how idle for a sinner to push himself before His throne, or to cheat Him with a show of ornament. This sham piety naturally is the subject next:—

- 6 Trick not thyself out before the King; and in the place of the great stand not thou up.
 7 For it is better to say to thee,—Come up hither; than to put thee down before the Prince whom thine eyes have seen.
- [6 Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men.
 7 For better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither, than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.]

“**Trick not thyself out;**” literally, *Adorn not thyself*; primarily, *Swell not thyself out*; or, as moderns are beginning to say, *Spread not thyself*. “**Before the King.**” That is the exact spot (v. 5) where the wicked are *digested*, and that as a lesson to the universe. How mad that bright spot as a place for *spreading oneself*, when the *digestion* of such states in that spot is its very object. The mazes of all conceit in the hypocrite are mainly the things creation makes by in this clinic before the Most High. V. 7. “**Better to say;**” i. e., *better that it should be said*. “**Thine eyes have seen.**” This seems in allusion to a former text (23:5),—“*Dost thou fly after Him as to thine eyes?*” The sinner roves with his “*eyes*” after Christ, and learns to count that sufficient, though it be mere selfish desire (21:26). How sad the astonishment in the end! A soul has *tricked itself out* through a life-time, and *stood in the places of the great*. It has “*seen the Generous One*” (literally), and looked pityingly at other men. It never knew the call, “**Come up hither;**” and hence never obeyed it. And, serving but as another spectacle before the throne (v. 4), it shall doff its bravery at the last, and be “**put down before the Prince whom [its] eyes have seen.**”

Tricking oneself out to deceive the King (v. 6) is not so in-

sane, however, as boldly to doubt Him. It is amazing how men build skepticism; when, of course, the trust to it must be for a dread eternity. What if it should all be false? Suppose the King, in planning for a universe, be for that cause unsearchable, how desperate the mistake of pluming our thought against His, and braving Him in a cool impenitency!—

- 8 Go not forth hastily to strive;
lest what thou doest, in its after conse-
quence,
be thy neighbor putting thee to shame.

8 Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame.

It is this quarrel, not his weakness or his shame, that makes the reprobate. Sin can be forgiven. It is **going “forth hastily** (i. e., crudely, as the sinner does) **to strive**” with God that is to emerge in the “**after consequence**.” Corruption ruins, no doubt; but it must bud now in the form of unbelief. Hence many of these gospel passages. “Cast out the scorner, and the cause of quarrel passes away” (22:10). “Only rebellion goes in search of evil” (17:10). And a like lesson in the Psalms (68:6), “Only the rebellious shall dwell in a dry place.” False piety is death (v. 7); but open enmity and cavil is the insamer issue. “**Lest what thou doest, etc.**” Here there has been always a difficulty. King James’ men settled it by help of Italics, and derived from it a striking version. But such bold resort is too much in the manner of Hitzig. The meaning would answer perfectly. ‘Hast thou thought,’ it would virtually ask, ‘as would be well certainly before an earthly fight, what thou wouldst do if overmatched and beaten?’ We have tried to avoid the Italics by imagining the word “*lest*” to have the sense of ‘else.’ “*Go not forth hastily to strive; else, what wilt thou do in the end thereof, when thy neighbor has put thee to shame?*” We find no precedent. We must give up the old version. We are driven to a sense which has not the ease of King James’, but has a profounder lesson. It preserves the significance of “*lest*,” because, really, above all one-syllabled particles, *το* seems incapable of change. More than that, it adds a thought.—The hostile caviller not only may come to grief, but his *going forth hastily to strive* may be the very thing

most grave in the sequel, when his neighbor shall be “**putting [him] to shame.**” “**Neighbor;**” the word that preserves the secular dress of the Proverb; but really, as perforce of the context (vs. 9, 17), it is our Great “*Neighbor*;” I mean God Almighty. “**Be;**” literally “*be in;*” a new case of **essentia.** “**Its;**” a suffix feminine; either to be understood as neuter, or as agreeing with “*strife;*” for “*strife,*” let it be observed, is the Hebrew in the first clause; not, “*to strive,*” as it is more euphuistically translated. This Hebrew is usually masculine. It is sometimes feminine, however, in its plural ending; and may, therefore, be a feminine here, from that ambiguity of gender which may inhere in it even as a singular.

But, “*strife*” or no “*strife,*” says Solomon, it is better to settle our disputes with first parties:—

- | | |
|---|--|
| 9 Debate thy cause with thy neighbor;
and have not the exposure of another tri-
bunal;
10 lest whosoever hear, pity thee;
and thine infamy turn not away. | <small> 9 Debate thy cause
 with thy neighbour
 himself, and discover
 not a secret to another;
 10 Lest he that hear-
 eth it put thee to
 shame, and thine in-
 famy turn not away. </small> |
|---|--|

Sad as it is to “**debate**” with God, yet, reverently, if we have a difference with Him, it is the very way. The civilities among “**neighbor**” men would lead them to talk mildly, if they were desiring to adjust a quarrel; and modesty of the feeblest kind would lead us to talk gently, if we are approaching our Maker. “*By slowness of anger,*” says the fifteenth verse, “*is a prince persuaded; and a soft tongue breaks the bone.*” Our cavil, if it have the small st honesty, we can afford to tell reverently to God; and what possible can be a more promising way? “**Have not the exposure of;**” literally, “*lay not bare.*” Our choice is between now and at the last, between the mercy-seat and the judgment-seat. Tell God all you think; state to Him your utmost cavil; press down upon Him with all your difficulties; make Him feel, in eloquent “*debate,*” all that your mind has to baffle it; complain as deeply as you suffer: there can hardly be a more hopeful interview. Do any thing with God that is manly and sincere in earthly earnestness of desire to, know the truth; but, oh, as the most homely shrewdness, “*have not the exposure of Another Tribunal.*” V. 10. “**Lest whosoever**

hear, pity thee." This is a strong expression; and yet people seem to have been dissatisfied with it, and to have sought an uncommon meaning for the verb, which is the usual one meaning to "*pity*," or *show mercy*. We doubt whether it ever means to *reproach* (14: 34). We have examined all the passages (Lev. 20: 17; Job 6: 14), and we doubt whether verb or noun ever mean anything distinct from "*pity*." If they do in other cases, they need not do so here. A common rendering of this verse is, that when we have a quarrel with a man, we had better debate the difficulty with himself in person, "*and not discover the secret to another*" (E. V.), lest *he*, hearing of it, feel that his secret is out; suspect that we have laid charges more than we really have; and, in this way, like a blind man striking in the dark, begin to lay about him, and utter *reproaches* which time even may not wipe away. This would do very well as a maxim. But the word "*pity*" does not, in the Hebrew, ever mean *reproach*. If it did, it would be so strangely seldom, that the chance would be always adverse. If it does not, the above meaning is impossible. The word "*secret*" (E. V.) is primarily a *council* or *divan*. "*Another*" is an adjective. The word "*to*" (E. V.) is not before it. It is masculine and singular, and agrees with *council*. The meaning, thus evolved, is good secularly. Go settle your quarrel with your foe, and don't let it go to court. But it is good eminently with the Almighty. *Debate your cause*, and bring out as eloquently as you are able all your injuries. Ask boldly what this means, and what that means, in God's administration. You know that He is a "*King*." He admits that as a "*King*" He is strangely unsearchable (v. 3), and that tough obstacles to faith, like brambles, infest His kingdom (24: 31). He does not wish you to "respect His person" (24: 23), or to be partial to Him in the working of your thought. He only asks you to be forbearing (25: 8); to be patient (v. 15); to be diligent (24: 27); to be fair towards Him in the management of your case (v. 6); and, by all means, to come to Him personally (v. 9); and not stay off in an indolent unbelief; or abide "*the exposure of Another Tribunal*."

The Wise Man has already said that "Death and life are in *the hand of the tongue*" (18: 21). This means that we may be

lost or saved by a single utterance. In Eastern speech (16:1; 18:21) the tongue is the universal agent. It means all conduct. This we have seen repeatedly. Paul was familiar with the idiom. "If thou wilt confess with thy lips the Lord Jesus" (Rom. 10:9) is tantamount in the East to speaking of all heartfelt submissions. What is wanting, therefore, in the sinner is "**a word uttered upon its time;**" like a rail-car appearing upon its appointed hour. "How grand for a man," so speaks the Proverb, "to confess Christ so as to be in time for the final judgment." There is danger of hollow words, of course; but so, of hollow faith, or hollow everything. It was the form of language of the Old Testament age. Solomon has been warning the sinner about the "presence of the King" (v. 6); and, after telling him that men like him are to be *digested*, and for the eye of the universe; and, after appealing to him,—How foolish to trick himself out (v. 6), when the clinic may need just such a case of intricate deception; he turns now to the other conduct, and, in use of the popular speech, warns his hearer to prepare for that "*time*" by "**a word**" of piety:—

**11 Apples of gold on a back ground of silver | ^{it} A word fitly
is a word uttered upon its time.**

spoken is like apples
of gold in pictures of
silver.

That is, I being unlikely to repent; intending it always (Acts 24:25); pretending it often (Matt. 7:14); but attending to it rarely: never hitting the mark of an humble and docile faith: how grand that "*word*" for me which (in Eastern thought) owns my sinfulness, and summons the advent of my Great Redeemer. "**Apples of gold;**" some bright decorating relief (like Sorek, Is. 5:2, the fashionable vine) high in fashion in the days of this King. "**On a back ground.**" We have no idea that we make this literal. The words mean, "*in figures;*" so, strictly,—"*apples of gold in figures of silver.*" Hence, let us translate at this distant period,—"*back-ground,*" as all that is important. It was some costly elegance that hit the reigning taste. Now, says Solomon, like that is the "*word*" that the sinner utters. Like that the *act*, we would say, or like that the *exercise*; but it is because the fashion has changed. That day

referred everything to *speech* (21:6). Man's business was his *speech* (12:14). His ruling decision was his "word" (15:23). "A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth" (13:2). He was doomed by his "decree" (16:1); and therefore his most extraordinary changes would be marked by the nature of his *confessions* (Ps. 37:30). The tongue is just as great in our day (Jas. 3:5, 6); but we say *act*, or *feeling*. "Upon its time." Some prefer, "*On its wheels*" (Böttcher); i. e. *deftly*, with skill. The Hebrew does give such a word; but it is rude. It means threshing-wheels (20:26), and probably of a heavy character. Why, therefore, any such resort? A noun, commoner by far, comfortably in accord with the rest of the passage, etymologically all in place, should hardly be put aside for one less well in every philological particular.

This "word" that saves a man, prayerfully uttered forth, will save his neighbors. Solomon often couples our own escape with our agency for others. If a "word" for one's self is like "*apples of gold*," a "word" to others, if under a corresponding figure, must be equally gay and beautiful:—

12 A ring of gold and trinket of fine gold
is a wise repressor upon a listening ear.

¹² As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise repressor upon an obedient ear.

We may take the whole literally. We are to live for ever. Eternally the friendship that saved us will be in the casket of our gems. On the "ear" that *listened* shall hang the word that taught it; and it shall be bright with blessed remembrances; yea, kept and gazed at through unnumbered ages.

For really, for such acts of mutual service must it be in the main that we are brought into the church of the elect. The word meaning *work* in Hebrew (24:27, נָכְלָה) means, first of all, *an errand*. The service of "a messenger" in a pedestrian age gave color to mere abstract speech. The Christian is "a messenger." In the great realm where Jehovah is the King (22:29; 25:6), acting, as, of course, He must, in large respects, through others, how it revives desperate forlornesses in our experience to have a true "messenger" in God's great administrations. Paul and Peter! What did they not do for us! In

the period of great account, how beautiful the acts of men, who, though poor sinners, turned many to salvation (Rom. 10:15):—

- 13 Like the sharp tingling of snow on a harvest day
is a trusty messenger to them that send him;
yea, the soul of his master he revives.

13 As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him; for he refresheth the soul of his masters.

“*Tingling* :” literally *sharpness*; the “*sharp*” *pleasant* “*tingling*.” “*Snow*,” for its uses in the summer, can be gotten in those Eastern towns either from the mountains, or from some winter store-house. God will make everybody serve Him, the reprobate as well as the saint, or figuratively, the rich as well as the poor (22:2). But the aptly-fitted errand, that the man peacefully in league with Him achieves, is like “*the tingling of snow*” in the heat of “*harvest*,” inconceivably refreshing. “A sweet savour,” Paul calls it. “We are to God a sweet savour of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:15). God “smelled a sweet savour” when Noah, in the dearth of our planet, looked out upon his fainted home, and sacrificed some of his few remaining “clean beasts.” Every Christian is a “*messenger*.” Life is a rounded errand. It is set into the universe; for “God has set the universe in [our] hearts” (Ec. 3:11). If we run well, it will be a perpetual delight. And “*like snow in harvest*,” it will be a dainty of the Feast, and tingle upon the palate both of ourselves and of our Emmanuel.

How sad through life to be dreaming of this (Is. 59:5), and never realize it!—

- 14 Clouds and wind and no rain
is a man boasting himself of a false gift.

14 Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain.

The frequency of such a character makes those sentences just passed more striking. The “apples of gold” (v. 11) and the “trinket of fine gold” (v. 12), and the “snow in the day of harvest,” would be less a treasure, if there were not so many counterfeits. A late enquirer among the churches* believes, that a large majority of Protestant professors are “*boasting*

* Rev. Dr. Fuller, of Baltimore.

(themselves) in a false gift." How apt the simile! "Clouds and wind, and no rain"! Who can distinguish from these, "clouds and wind," and plenteous refreshings? How do they sail over the sky with the same pretentious looks, and even with more boding of a torrent! "Boasting himself." This is literal. Mark how the Wise Man accentuates the evidences. Here is a cloud sailing over, that fairly *exults* in its freighted treasures. The word could not be better chosen. There are worshipers often more joyous under "*a false gift*" than poor starvelings dare to be under a genuine profession. It is one of the unsearchablenesses of the King (v. 3) that He tries the wicked (v. 5), and of course He shows them in all conceivable characters before the throne. The church has two uses,—to nourish saints, and to furnish curious hypocrites. The one or the other (which, God only knows) is the larger company. He only tells us, "apples of gold" (v. 11) is a genuine religious confession: "a trinket of fine gold" (v. 12) is a successful application of the gospel: "the cold of snow on a day of harvest" is a really faithful "messenger;" but "clouds and wind, and no rain, is a man boasting himself in a false gift." "Boasting himself;" this is to be read literally: *thinking well of himself; self-righteous.*

Cavilling and self-excuse are signs of "*a false gift*;" not modesty and slowness to criminate The King:—

15 By slowness of anger is a prince per-
suaded;

and a soft tongue breaks the bone.

15 By long forbearing
is a prince persuaded,
and a soft tongue break-
eth the bone.

We have explained this before (see vs. 8, 9). That we are to be bold is a great counsel of this book; not complaining (17:19, 22); not defending with deceit (24:23); not settling down under the difficulties of the faith (24:31); but working (24:27); rather, fighting (Is. 1:18); and carrying our debate into the very presence of the Most High (v. 9); i. e., quick-cut or prompt; not putting off matters to the final judgment (v. 9, second clause). This text assumes all this as consistent with the most perfect humility. "By slowness of anger is a prince persuaded." The humility is most politic. "Per-

suaded;” literally, “*laid open*.” We shall certainly do well if we “*debate*” with God (v. 9); but we must do it modestly. It is the “*soft tongue*” that “**breaks the bone**.”

But, with strange insight, Solomon lays bare another principle; a something patent in the modern church. We hope too greedily. I do not mean by that, that we trust too much; but we go after hope too nakedly. We take the “**honey**” of the gospel too selfishly; and feed on peace too indolently, and on its own account:—

- 16 Hast thou found honey, eat what is sufficient for thee;
lest thou be filled with it, and vomit it up. 16 Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.

The figure varies. In a former sentence we are commanded to “eat honey because it is good” (24:13); and that was very carefully explained. It meant that piety was itself good, and that we were to “taste and see” (Ps. 34:8) that, before we could be Christians. But now the figure varies;—There is a sweetness of eternal *hope*, even when we have not got down to the sweetness of a saving piety. We are to put on the helmet of hope. So the Apostle tells us (1 Thess. 5:8). But Solomon cautions us that we are to put no more on than is “*sufficient*.” We are eating more than enough “*honey*” when we have no right to eat any; and so we may be eating too much when we ought to be getting more. There is such a thing as having more hope than evidence. And if a man has too much confident hope of heaven for the amount he has of piety, there certainly is a case of eating more “*honey*” than is “*sufficient*.” Now, honey is useful; or why say, “**what is sufficient**”? It cheers and lifts and feasts us while we do the work. Paul calls it a “helmet,” because it protects the head. We should be crazed, if we had no hope. But when hope becomes a mere honey to gorge ourselves with, while we stop altogether our onward march, it is a sign that we are boasting ourselves in a false gift (v. 14). Blessed be the man that has “**found honey**.” Let him eat so much as is sufficient for him in this dismal pilgrimage. But, when he is once refreshed like Jonathan, let him sound for an advance. Let him strike for more confidence.

Above all, let him *search his own glory*, as a text below has it (v. 27); making inquisition of all his trusts; and so, avoiding the danger (23 : 8) that the morsel he has eaten he must “**vomit up**,” having only been cloyed with a sweet but deceitful dainty.

Now, again, more strikingly:—

- 17 Make scarce thy foot from thy neighbor's house ;
lest he be full of thee, and hate thee.

17 Withdraw thy foot
from thy neighbour's
house ; lest he be weary
of thee, and so hate
thee.

No householder but must have other ends in view than mere host-craft. If we grow utterly uninteresting; if the freshness even of a new face wears common, and we go to him for mere talk and shelter; if we turn our feet over to our Master's, simply that we may be wined (21 : 17), and fattened in our hopes; how long will even Christ keep open door for such a visitor? With all hospitality there must be some answering back. We must be a credit to our host; or, at least, some sort of object of respect; or, at the very smallest, some sort of a subject of compassion. It must, at any rate, do us good to be a guest, or else what an insanity ever to admit or entertain us. So, therefore, with Christ. It is not even kind in Him to have us ever at His “**house**.” That mode of using His mansion that we have now portrayed; merely to eat honey in; merely to feel sheltered by; merely to waste our time at, when we ought to be busy at our duty; is quite out of the question as any good to us from our Redeemer. We are to “**make scarce [our] foot**;” that is, to *make it rare* (literally). If we strike one blow of work, and then run in to rest and warm, it is a picture of self-pleasing; and, alas for our hopes! it must make Heaven “**full of [us], and [so] hate [us].**”

And this is not only bad on our own account, but bad on the account of them who “**witness**” it:—

- 18 A club and a sword and a sharp arrow
is a man making answer for his neighbor
as a deceived witness.

18 A man that bear-
eth false witness against
his neighbour is a maul,
and a sword, and a
sharp arrow.

Witness-bearing influences seem to be endlessly in the eye of Solomon God is known by such things. He has no utterance

for Himself except through the mouths of His creation. All men speak for Him. He that feeds on the honey of the gospel without its rights is a most insidious deceiver; and, considering the mischief of deceit, violent figures are not too bitter. "**A club;**" i. e., *a war club*. "**A sword and a sharp arrow.**" Even some amiable woman, full of affectionate courtesies, is these deadly things; and her "*witness*" is more deadly on this very account of her grace and excellence. "**A man making answer for his neighbor as a deceived witness.**" This in our Old Version reads, "*A man that beareth false witness against his neighbor.*" So is the language of the Decalogue. The Hebrew is the same. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" (Ex. 20:16). As a statute among the all-comprehensive Ten, there seems a falling off about this even before we inspect the original. "Thou shalt not kill;" "Thou shalt not steal;" "Thou shalt not commit adultery," are sample orders, which would lead us to expect, as their companion, this:—"Thou shalt not deceive." Instead of that, we have something narrower, as to courts of justice. The Hebrew at once enlarges it, however. The word "*bear*" (E. V.) is, literally "*answer*," or, in strictness, *strike up*, or *begin to speak*. The word "*against*" (E. V.), on the other hand, is the preposition "*in*." Let us stickle for each distinctive meaning. God wrote ב, not בְּ. He meant, therefore, *in*, or *in the interest of*; *concerning*, or "*for*," that is, we are to understand *an involvement*, or *concernment*, on our neighbor's part. The idea is, that we are not to utter untrue testimony where our neighbor will be *concerned*. And, therefore, all falsehood; all sad example; all counterfeit hope; everything whereby my neighbor may be stumbled, or made weak; every instance where I deceive him when he has a right to know, or bewilder him where he has a claim to guidance (of course much wider injuries than bearing false witness in a court) are every one of them covered by our text, and every one intended by the ninth commandment. It ought to be read that way, therefore:—"Thou shalt not kill." "Thou shalt not commit adultery." "Thou shalt not steal." "Thou shalt not make answer for thy neighbor as a witness of falsehood."

We must remember, next, that "*a deceived witness*" cannot make good his error in the day of trouble. The child warmly nestled at home—if his minister lead him astray; if his parents feed him on honey, and inspire his hopes; if, having been plunged into distress, people hail it as faith, and lift him immediately back, and pronounce it conversion—may think it cruel to be ruined by the good; and so this Proverb thinks it. That is its special meaning. They are "*a club and a sword and a sharp arrow*" (v. 18). Even God's minister, if he *make answer for his neighbor as a deceived witness*, is a painted Indian. But does that help the matter? The child cannot come back upon the church, and plead his having been deceived, as a bar to the final judgment:—

- 19 A broken tooth and a stiffened foot
is the trustiness of the faithless in the day
of trouble.

19. Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.

"*Stiffened*;" supposed by others to be from a different verb.* The lexicographer, however, must fix it so, as an exception and by a change. It comes naturally from the verb **תָּבַדֵּל**, the Hophal of which means, to be *fixed*, or *set*. The text implies not only worthlessness, but disappointment. If "*a tooth*" were not a *tooth*, nor "*a foot*" a *foot*, it would make less difference. It is as *teeth* and *feet* that they curse so, if "*broke*" or "*stiffened*." If a hope were not a hope; yea, all a man has to stand on, it would make less difference though it failed in "**the Day of Trouble.**"

Confidence, therefore, particularly in its more exalting moods (Luke 18:11),—how sad it seems when it has no possible foundation!—

- 20 One tricking out a garment on a cold day;
vinegar upon natron;
and a singer of songs upon an evil heart.

20. As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.

This is in the purer proverbial form. These three are sorted in a class. There are other similar instances (11:22). It is

* Meaning to *waver*, to *totter*.

not well to destroy this antique look. The meaning is, that there are three things that are ajar, all of them; first, a gay trimmer of his robes, when he should have them on to cover him from “cold;” second, “vinegar upon natron,” when all the value of the alkali is that it should be kept from acid; and third, “a singer of songs;” the Bible language for high delight, “upon an evil heart;” i. e., upon a condition of spirit that justifies no rejoicing. “Tricking out.” Some say,—“putting-off.” Our Bible has it, “taketh away.” All help us to the sense. But the idea of “tricking out” has usage in its defence (Job 40:10; Ez. 23:40); whereas both the others are accommodated for this single text. “Natron;” not potash, or common nitre. “Upon;” more usually interpreted “to.” The “evil heart” has been imagined “an heavy heart” (E. V.); and the unfitness conceived has been that of “singing to” others when their hearts were troubled. On the contrary, it is just the opposite; the evil of being *not* troubled; the evil of a shout of ecstasy when we are quite deceived. The “tricking out,” when we are in the “cold,” and the blunting of what is caustic, only to render it naught, is the symbol in the Proverb for a man’s gladness, when his soul is lost.

Forbearing self-flattery, however, is not so good as justifying it, or realizing the hopes we have prematurely imagined. Certain rugged evidences will assure of this, which Paul repeats in a chapter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 13). Do not abandon hope; but be what you think you be. So that, instead of gorging honey (v. 27), you should be collecting it; and while making scarce your foot from your Neighbor’s house (v. 17), you should be out in the field, cultivating mild tastes and forbearing tempers; preparing to be honored guests, and not frequenters of an imagined refuge:—

- 21 If he who hates thee hunger, give him food
 to eat;
 if he thirst, give him water to drink;
22 for, shovelling live coals thyself upon his
 head,
 Jehovah shall punish thee also.

21 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:

22 For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.

Solomon and the Apostle Paul wonderfully agree. Paul has

carried mistake to its very utmost margin. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels; though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor; though I give my body to be burned!" (1 Cor. 13:3). The poor postulant who had been inspired with every miracle; who had preached as with the breath of angels; who had sold all he was worth, and brought it to this very Paul; who had stood out grand martyr for the faith, till it had blown upon him, and haled him to the stake, the Apostle conceives of as never having been religious. Notice his immediate instinct. In going for the finest evidences we find him *per saltum* just with Solomon. "Charity suffereth long and is kind. Charity beareth all things." There is scarce a feature that is not painted with a kindred brush. The Apostle resorts to this very Proverb (Rom. 12:20). He takes the Septuagint translation. Here let me pause a moment. This Septuagint translation; what was it? It was made 'Before Christ.' It was not inspired. It had not even all advantages for being correct. It was the opinion of a mass of commentators (not all learned, at a time long after Solomon wrote, and in a region and of a language quite well removed) in respect to the perfect meaning of all the Scriptures. Of course it had great mistakes. When those mistakes were known to Paul, he sometimes corrected them (Rom. 9:33; so 1 Pet. 4:8). When they were not important; when they had grown fast to Jewish speech; when they expressed the truth, and merely varied it from the old idea; the Holy Ghost embraced them, and ratified the change. This Proverb is a noble instance. It had evidently become idiomatic among the Jews; and *heaping coals of fire* meant *surpassing placableness*. Paul found it just in this shape; and, whether he knew or not, the Holy Ghost knew, all His own first intention and all His now present use of what the Seventy had been making of the text. He takes it as it is. He gives it a new heavenly warrant. He adopts the adopted emblem; and it comes down in the New Testament shape as really a fresh inspiration. There are many such cases (Rom. 11:26, 27; Heb. 13:15; 1 Pet. 4:18). Indeed all renderings are a departure somewhere. So we, going back to the Hebrew, have a right to the original; and may

seek the mind of the Spirit as the Proverb gave it. If so; “*heaping coals*” is not a good emblem. Some commentators say that it means really vengeance; that is, that our kindness to an enemy will bring him vengeance: we shall be revenged for our very tenderness (Estius, Grotius, Whitby). But what an inconsistent interpretation! Solomon is teaching charity. Charity lies not in acts, but in feelings. Solomon would bribe charity by the fire it will bring upon its enemies. How utterly impossible. The usual thought is, that “*coals*” express the utter melting of the adversary; that being kind to him after his acts will perfectly soften him; and this might be a very good meaning if the figure were not so utterly inapt. “*Coals*” are a favorite emblem in the Bible for overwhelming wrath (Ps. 120:4; 140:10). There is great unity in all types. In that hieroglyphic age, emblems remained fixed in practice. Pouring out coals was, withering blast and vengeance. But when we come to examine the grammar, everything is against the Septuagint. The emphatic pronoun **תְּמַלֵּךְ** (i. e., thou “**thyself shoveling coals**,” instead of leaving it for God); the participle with its contingent sense; the **נ**, to express the consequence; and the *repayment*, which, in this Hebrew verb, means either good (Ruth 2:12), or evil (Gen. 44:4); all carve nicely one sense:—“**If (thine enemy, or, literally,) he who hates thee hunger, give him food to eat; if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; for (not “in so doing,” LXX., but) shovelling live coals thyself upon his head** (instead of leaving it to God), **Jehovah shall also** (i. e., in addition to the wrong doer, whom He would have punished at any rate, if thou hadst stood off; in addition to him who hates thee, He will also) **punish thee.**” Paul takes up the *spirit* of the passage by prefixing the expressions, “Dearly beloved brethren, avenge not *yourselves*, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. *Therefore*, if thine enemy, etc.” “*Live coals;*” from a verb to *burn*; distinct from black coals, which occur in an after-Proverb (26:21). It is used by David (Ps. 40:10),—“Let burning coals fall upon them.” “*Shoveling;*” literally, *taking up* as from a hearth. For this participial contingency see Class II. “*Punish;*” literally, *make*

whole; finally, *requite*, either with good or evil. This difficult benevolence, so much like the “charity” of the Apostle (1 Cor. 13 : 3), Solomon imposes as an evidence of piety.

An opposite conduct plays havoc among the ungodly:—

- 23 A north wind breeds rain,
and angry countenances a secret tongue. | 23 The north wind
| driveth away rain; so
| doth an angry counten-
| ance a backbiting
| tongue.

The recoil from a bad church is almost always “secret” among the impenitent, especially at the beginning. A bad tempered believer revolts the world’s people about him, even when they confess it hardly to themselves. The vast majority of infidelity has been “secret” infidelity. The vast majority of cavilling has been by “a secret tongue.” “A north wind breeds rain;” so said the weather-wise in Palestine; “and angry countenances” (that is, such as would heap coals *themselves*, v. 22; men without charity, 1 Cor. 13), secret talk, and secret doubt, and secret hate, as against the system of the gospel.

Because, though those strange forgivenesses (v. 21) may seem miraculous, yet any thing short is cousin-german to bare maliciousness. To avenge, is to be a judge; to be a judge, is to have a leash to let loose passion whenever we please. To let loose passion, is to be a devil. And to be a devil, is to be an utter abomination, and that to both God and man. Solomon, therefore, points the whole with the Mad-Woman-Proverb (v. 24); and then goes back again in verse 25 to the considerations of hypocrisy:—

- 24 Better is dwelling upon a pinnacle of the roof,
than a contentious woman and a house in common. | 24 It is better to
| dwell in a corner of
| the house-top, than
| with a brawling woman,
| and in a wide house.

We will not pause upon this (see 21 : 9, 19).

- 25 Cold water upon a fainting soul,
and good news from a Far-Off Land. | 25 As cold waters to
| a thirsty soul, so is
| good news from a far
| country.

Religion has amazing difficulties; and we have been wading

through them, text after text; but oh, glorious! the genuine assurance! “**Far-Off Land.**” “*A far-off land*” sends specially “**good news,**” because we faint the more, and long the harder, for the very reason that it is so distant. They come more seldom. And our relations with far-off lands are weightier and more critical than with those beside us. So much for the secular significance. But oh! the spiritual! The righteous scarcely are saved (1 Pet. 4:18). We are in a wilderness (Rev. 12:6, 14). Our enemies are Legion (Eph. 6:12). We run the gauntlet with daily foes (Eph. 5:16); and that with daily changes in their attempts to trip us (Prov. 5:6). The sinner, wherever he may be met, is *faint* with fatigue. Our Saviour knew this when He shaped His appeal, “Come unto me all ye that labor, &c.” (Matt. 11:28). Now, high over all other modes of comfort is the “*good news from a Far-Off Land.*” All right there,—come anything! A man’s life may be a perfect failure, *quoad* the opinion of the world (v. 26); but, if he have Heaven, it has been the very best: there has not been an hour of it that has not been “marshalled by a divine tactic;” the best for the man, and the best for his part in the war.

This is the teaching of the next Proverb:—

- 26 A trampled fountain and ruined spring
is a righteous man thought tottering by the wicked.

¹ 26 A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain and a corrupt spring.

“**A trampled fountain.**” Consider that. Is it any less “*a fountain?*” Its lord has turned in cattle upon it. And why? First, because he wanted it for that; second, because the injury would be only on the top; third, because a stroke at any time would repair it. Then where’s the difference? You remember how it looked when you were a boy. It was clear and sparkling and perpetual under the oak. You come to it after a lapse of years, and you can scarcely find it. The cattle have “*trampled*” it out, and the mud and tussock have usurped its place; and yet what matter? deep under the hill it is rilling out as beautiful as of yore. This is the image of the Proverb. Literally, “*a righteous man shaking before a wicked man;*” i.e., *in his presence.* The old idiom makes this mean *in his eyes*

(16 : 2), or *in his opinion* (Jas. 1 : 27). Zacharias and Elizabeth "were righteous before God;" that is, "*in His opinion*" (Luke 1 : 6). "Thou shalt have no other Gods before Me" (Ex. 20 : 3) i. e., *in My opinion*; though thou mayest not think them other Gods at all. "*A righteous man shaking before a wicked man;*" i. e., *thought to totter*, or to be *a failure*; one of those poor unfortunates, in a corner of a counting-house, when the worldling, who has pitied him, stands up on 'Change as the envy even of believers; though he may be faint (v. 25) and broken, has heard the "good news from [the] Far-Off Land" (v. 25), and has the "cold waters" yet for his thirsty appetite. "*Troubled fountain*" (E. V.); literally, "*trampled*." "*Corrupt*" (E. V.); literally, *destroyed, disfigured*. The emblem can have no mistake. The cattle-*trampled* fountain, and the *disfigured* spring, is the world-battered believer; a failure merely to the eye; but springing, under the very hoof of earthliness, with a gracious stream of perennial refreshing.

It is not necessary that the "*fountain*" even should know its own wealth. The righteous man is a failure often "before" himself. It is the habit of God to discipline men by the lack often of even spiritual delights. And it is better for a man to lack assurance, if it leads him deeply to probe his own state, and to sift sufficiently his real excellencies of living:—

27 To eat much honey is not good ; | 27 *It is not good to
but close scrutiny of men's own glory is | eat much honey; so
glory.* for men to search their own glory is not glory.

The earlier clause has been largely anticipated under another Proverb (v. 16); the second has been very differently translated (E. V.). It has been understood to mean, "*It is not good to eat much honey, and to gloat over one's own glory is not glory.*" This, secularly, would have an excellent sense; and, spiritually, would confirm that lesson about *hope* (v. 16); that it is not well to gloat over it; or to be lounging at the fireside of a mere assurance (v. 17); but Italics, it will be seen, have to be inserted for the word "*not*" (E. V.); and the strain, to justify that, is not needed in the other rendering. The other rendering is an advance upon the sense, and shows us the

great reason that *eating honey* (clause first) is not good. "Glory;" literally weight. It means in the Old Testament both *excellence* and the *honor* that attends it. The great *excellence* of the saint, *quodan* attention to himself, is to search into his own excellence, and see whether it be of a genuine kind. "Men's;" literally, "their." It might be translated "*one's.*" We retained a plural as the original expression.

There follow all sorts of statements, showing the advantage of the saint, if he is not a failure (v. 26), and how great, as the one good thing, is the good news from the Far-Off Land. First; any other than a saint is really "**broken down** :—"

28 A broken down city without a wall
is a man who has no enclosure around his
spirit.

28 He that hath no
rule over his own spirit
is like a city that is
broken down, and
without walls.

Of course, the right impulse is to search the emblem. What is "**a wall?**" Not a restraint for a city (E. V.), but its defence. We have no cause to wander from the type. The first great want of the sinner is his own defence. The "Town of Man-Soul" has two enemies; one, Omnipotent; the other most like Him (in that) of all creation. Both are victors. To dream of resisting either, while we are at war with both, is idiotic and forlorn. If there ever be a city so crushed as to be without a bar, that is the soul of the poor impenitent. "**Enclosure;**" from a verb to *shut up*. It does not mean, "*no rule over*" (E. V.): that has been already preached about (see 16:32); but it means an "*enclosure*" to *shut it up*. God, bearing down upon our guilt, and Satan, upon our helplessness, find us "**a city without a wall;**" and can enter and destroy us at their mutual pleasure.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Nor can we point out to God a way to spare us, except we repent:—

i As snow in summer and rain in harvest ;
so honor does not suit a fool.

"It is the glory of Gods to cover over a thing ; but the glory of Kings to search a thing out " (see 25 : 2). God has a universe to govern. He looks (like these Proverbs) down to the very depths. Man may cavil at being allowed to sin : but let us forget all that. Suppose that he does sin. Certainly, if he does sin, and refuses to repent, why, then, to "**honor**" him would destroy creation. It is put more plainly in the verse that follows :—

- 2 Like a bird, as to roaming, like a swallow,
 as to flight,
 so a curse to no purpose does not come. 2 As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying; so the curse causeless shall not come.

The type is graceful. The "**bird**" is so little, and his "**flight**" and "**roaming**" about so merry, that we never think of him as having an aim. And yet, the wildest sport upon the wing is continually directed, and obeys the mind of the humblest voyager in the heavens. **Curses**; of all other things, not aimless. "**He doth not afflict willingly**" (Lam. 3 : 33). And so, whether large or trivial; the One Great Curse, or its numerous army of descendants; none are without a "**purpose**." In each gentle pulse upon the wind the twittering "**swallow**" has no more clear a meaning than these flying griefs, as they float fitfully toward them who are to bear them. "**To no purpose.**" This Hebrew has two meanings; sometimes, *for no cause* (Job 2 : 3); and as above, "*to no purpose*" (3 : 30; 24 : 28). We can select only by the sense. We selected "*to no purpose*" here, because the preposition is **בְּ**, and not **לְ**. Had we selected "*for no cause*," there would have emerged a beautiful sense. "*As the bird BY wandering, as the swallow BY flying, so the curse causeless shall not come*" (E. V.). The meaning *then*,—as birds do not make their appearance in the Spring as apparitions, starting up ghost-like in the fields as they seem to, but have come long journeys, many of them in the night, and have reached us by honest flying, so the curse "**does not come**" without a "**cause**." The meanings, as will be seen, are very different. One is, that the curse has a "**cause**" on our part; the other, that it has a *reason* on the part of our Creator. Now, both are true. Both are very expressive.

Both have a fitness in the passage. We would be at a loss to select, were it not for certain circumstances. “*To no purpose*” yields the wider truth, and, moreover, is the bolder mystery. The curse had a subsistence earlier than we, and a “cause” later than it had a *reason*. It was predetermined from the very beginning. And, therefore, ours is the bolder grasping of the cavil, and replies to the sinner more deeply. It agrees better with the rest. And in view of the prepositions (5) before the verbs, we make no pause upon the choice, but give boldly the above translation. Let us understand, therefore:—As a bird has a “purpose” “as to [his] flight;” so the “curse” has a “purpose,” if it ever light upon the sinner.

As in 25:5, he gives a half view, next, of the “purpose” itself:—

3 A whip for the horse, a bit for the ass,
and a rod for the fools' back.

| 3 A whip for the
horse, a bridle for the
ass, and a rod for the
fool's back.

The meaning is, that the “curse” is to a *fool* what “*a whip*” is to a “*horse*.” Now “*a whip*” is to a “*horse*,”—not a thing he likes; not necessarily a provision for his good. We must be careful to bring out the articulate type, as in the instance of the *city wall* (25:28). “*A whip*” is to make a “*horse*” useful. A “*curse*” is to make a man useful: to force him to be so, whether he will or not. This, then, is one of the hard conditions of the sinner. We ought to search out our own glory (25:27), and be sure we have a genuine gift (25:14), and submit to the remedial plan of the Redeemer (Matt. 25:27), that we may be able to escape a doom so stern as that of the finally impenitent. “*A whip for the horse.*” Otherwise he will be of no account. “*A bit for the ass.*” Otherwise he will tear everything to pieces. “*And a rod for the fools' back.*” Otherwise they are a blot upon the Almighty. That His throne may be set firm in righteousness, there must be a *digesting* of the wicked before the King (25:5). “**Fools;**” plural. Alas! They are a mighty multitude.

Now if they cavil, what are we to do? If our own hearts cavil, is there to be a reply? The King is confessed to be unsearchable (25:3), and there are many mysteries about this very “*curse*” (v. 2). Are we to defer to the helplessness of the

sinner, and pity him on his half grounds for doubt? Or are we to take a middle course? explain all we can, and leave the rest under a confession of our foolishness? This latter, beyond a doubt. Submit to all the darkness, Solomon would say (25:8), but open all the half lights (14:7; 24:9). And so for others. “**Answer a fool**,” and yet “**answer not a fool**.” “*Answer a fool*;” not with any dream that you thoroughly answer him, “lest [you] be like him,” and a fool yourself. And yet by all means “*answer*” him. “*Answer* wherever you can, lest he think you can’t: exploding all baseless heresies and mistakes: lest, hardening himself where he might be convinced, and defrauding himself where there is everything to be said, he erect himself against facts where he has not been taught, and “**become wise in his own eyes**.” All this two Proverbs in their quaint paradox are at once to set forth:—

- 4 Answer not a fool according to his folly ;
lest thou be like him, even thou thyself.
5 Answer a fool according to his folly ;
lest he become wise in his own eyes.

4 Answer not a fool
according to his folly,
lest thou also be like
unto him.

5 Answer a fool ac-
cording to his folly.
lest he be wise in his
own conceit.

The explanation has probably been enough. “*Answer not a fool*;” because much mystery does not admit of answer, and you will be a fool yourself. But more. The natural man does not discern the things of the Spirit of God. If you answer a natural man, with the idea that mere answers can turn him, you must “*be like him*,” as having no sense yourself of what is purely spiritual. “*Thou [shalt] be like him, even thou thyself*” (emphatic pronoun). Notice here a grand rebuke of reason in all attempts to convince the sinner. Nevertheless “*Answer a fool*,” and bow to just as great a rebuke to reason. We use reason far too gingerly. Reason is a divine creation. It is an instrument. There is a thought as though it were wicked to go too deep. On the contrary, we are to out-think the fool. If we leave science to work her way, she will grow *wise in her own conceit*. “*Answer*” her. Rationalistic infidelity is by no means an infidelity in reason. And the church should make that to be seen. Scripture has been belied in the direction of

Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 2). Nothing is more irrational than Rationalism. And one of the first *answers to the fool* which he shall receive in the Judgment will be, that he had all the *reason* for believing Christ which he had for anything beside, and a host of greater ones peculiar to the gospel.

There follow a series of Proverbs to explain the “curse” (v. 2); and to show, as far as may be possible, the necessity of vengeance. For example,—The universe is a whole: the parts of it are under tribute: all creatures have a use. The favorite language of the Proverbs is,—All men are “messengers” (22: 29). Insane persons, if sent on errands, would destroy Universal Government:—

6 One who cuts off the feet, one who drinks wrong,
is he who sends messages by the hand of a fool. 6 He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool, cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage.

“One who cuts off the feet:” that is, who cuts off the means of ever moving forward. “One who drinks wrong;” that is, one who, by voluntary act, like drinking, accepts iniquity. God, so speak these metaphors, would cripple everything if he indulged the wicked. True, they are not exhaustive. They are but single lights. But they bestud the firmament with stars; which, though they do not smother out the night, yet pick the path, and save the saint, if he ever chooses to be guided.

Not only is “*the fool*” no messenger (v. 6), but he can’t be taught:—

7 The legs drag after the lame; 7 The legs of the lame are not equal; so is a parable in the mouth of fools.
so does a proverb in the mouth of fools.

“Proverb.” The English Version has it “*parable*.” These sudden changings are unhappy. It is the common word for “*Proverb*,” and is the very title of the Book. Solomon made it the preaching of his age; and, so, we understand it as the gospel. A stiffened leg is a curse to a man: so may be the gospel. The idea is,—a leg is necessary to a man, and a thing on which he trusts; yet, lamed, it becomes an incumbrance. “The legs drag after the lame;” so that sometimes men cut

them off. So "*a Proverb.*" Instead of guiding the lost, it may actually curse them. Especially if it be in their "**mouth!**" If the wicked understand the gospel, and actually teach it to their children, and after that continue "**fools,**" it is the **dragging** limb. Woe be to the man that, with such a "**hand**" or "**foot**" (Matt. 18:8), shall be "**cast into hell fire.**" "**Drag;**" literally, "**hang,**" like a bucket. "**After;**" literally, "**from.**" "**So is;**" actually, nothing more than "**and.**"

To elevate a man, if he be spiritually "**a fool**," not only will be a curse to himself, but will make him a dangerous neighbor to all about him :—

**8 As he that binds a stone in a sling,
so is he that gives honor to a fool.**

**| 8 As he that bindeth
a stone in a sling; so
is he that giveth hon-
our to a fool.**

"**Binds;**" i. e., "*fixes*," or, simply, "*puis.*" It is not the idea of *tying* the stone (Bertheau, Ewald), so that it cannot be shot out. "**As he that binds a stone in a sling;**" i. e., as he that fixes a stone where it will not only (1) be hurled clean away, but also (2) do damage to those it reaches, "**so is he that gives honor**" of any conceivable shape to a poor impenitent. If we give him a good meal, he must account for it. If we teach him, we make him nearer to the devil. This is the weak point in State Schools. The old Church Schools of Scotland, barring their support by the State, are the models for our day. To raise a man in intellect; to make him honored; to give him money; to lift him into conspicuous place; to endow him with anything under the stars, except religion; is *to bind a stone in a sling.* It will all be shot away; and be sure mortally to injure other impenitents. "*As a bag of jewels on a heap of stones*" is the modern favorite rendering (Zöckler). It would typify *waste*, and would be no advance on the previous Proverb. The "*sling*" is the fitting emblem. "*A bag of jewels*" is no meaning for the noun. It occurs but once, but it comes from a verb meaning to *stone*, or to *throw stones*. This, with a **נ** before it, is no Hebrew for "*a bag of jewels.*" The Septuagint, therefore, must be right in thinking of "*a sling;*" and that, more certainly, for the reason, that the other substantive means simply "*a stone,*" and

must be strained exceedingly to mean "*a heap*" of them. So, then, we argue for the older rendering. The "Covenant" may be death. All "*honor*" is dangerous to "*a fool*." The gospel with its honeyed hopes, or even Christ in self-flattered conceits, is *a stone bound in a sling*. It is not pitiful in God to give too much of anything that is to be *slung away*. His gifts, even of the truth, may be niggardly, out of compassion. "For it had been better not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after [we] have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto [us]" (2 Pet. 2:21).

And yet, how unconscious is the reprobate of being injured by religion!—

- 9 A thorn has gone up into the hand of the drunkard,
and a proverb into the mouth of fools. ^g*As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard; so is a parable in the mouth of fools.*

This unconsciousness through drink has been sketched before (23:35). A man busying himself about the church; paying its ministers; hearing its truths; even praying for his children, and for himself, in a hard poor way, as the impenitent pray continually: yea, a man fascinated by hope, and actually professing the faith like the people of the Redeemer; how little does he think of the Shirt of Nessus as that very religion that has wrapped his limbs! **The thorn in the hand of a drunkard!** How plain the type! How mad to be a drunkard! How stupid, on the heights of Sion, to "see not our signs"! The man, who, at the very side of Christ, never does anything to please Him, and never gives anything but to please himself, has less to complain of than some far-off wretch, who has no conception that he has any piety. He is only more drunk. And as the poor inebriate can receive even his mortal blow, and never know it, so the sinner may be sticking poison in his "mouth," and never think of it, but as his soul's deliverance.

Now for God to reward such a man!—

- 10 An arrow wounding everybody
is he, also, that rewards the fool, and re- ¹⁰*The great God, that formed all things, both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors.*

The stricter fate damned one soul. This would ruin "everybody." "**An arrow;**" usually, *many*; called "*an arrow*," perhaps, because they are *many* (*Job 16:13*). The English Version, given above, is built upon the fact that it means also "*great*." "*The great [One] that formed all.*" The verb, too, would certainly answer: but what would the sense be? Where would be the fresh effect? In a contest for the thought, assuredly, where the grammar is the same, the mind of the Spirit must be that which is the most significant. "**An arrow wounding everybody.**" It is the Pohal. The verb means to *bore* through, to *perforate*. The meaning, "*formed*" (E. V.), is from another root. "*Everybody;*" literally, "*all.*" **Rewarding** [*one*] fool would destroy the universe. It would upset its government. Nay, it is a conceit. Secularly, the text might be every day practical; spiritually, never. The case it treats of is utterly impossible.

But not only is the gospel thus wasted on the fool (*9:8*); but, stranger yet, his own uppermost convictions:—

11 As the dog turns back to his vomit again, | ^{11 As a dog return-}
the fool turns back in his folly. <sup>eth to his vomit; so a
fool returneth to his
folly.</sup>

What "**the dog**" throws from him with disgust, his appetite craves after, and brings him to, again. This will be horrible in the Pit. Delicate spirits, that were aghast at crimes, will reach them as they journey deeper. Nay, in this life "**the fool turns back**" in two ways. He does better sometimes than he does at others; and he is better now than he will be afterward. These are distinct experiences. There is the lesser turning, of the re-entering sort, in which a man promises to amend, and forgets it; and thus vomits up a sin, and swallows it again. And there is the sad cometary walk, where the curve is different, and is never to return! It bears off toward the Pit. Its point to-day was its horror yesterday. It bends from its early tastes. It comes (upon its flight) into regions which seem strangely distant; and, going out forlornly into the cold, it shivers at its fate, as it sins away, almost consciously, the possibilities of salvation. "**In his folly;**" not "*to his folly*" (E. V.). The "*vomit*" is sensual delights. It is "*in folly*" that he moves and turns.

In the last chapter and in the one before it we saw instances in which the same God was divided into two persons, Jehovah, and the King (24 : 21 ; 25 : 2). Such rhetoric wholly neutralizes all the proof of any Trinity. It is not an unusual tendency of revelation (Zech. 3 : 1-7). In the next two verses of the present chapter, the same is to be observed. There is the general "fool" or impenitent man (v. 12), embracing all the qualities of the lost; and then, as though inside of him, the "man wise in his own eyes." Again, in the verse afterward (v. 13), there is the same "fool," and inside of him "*the sluggard*," or the man who says "*there is a lion in the way*." Now this first character in a man, the doctrinally-hardened part of him, Solomon says is specially hopeless :—

12 Seest thou a man wise in his own eyes?
Hope for a fool must be outside of him.

| 12 Seest thou a man
wise in his own con-
ceit? there is more
hope of a fool than of
him.

The distinction which the two verses make (associated) is very perfect. There are two parts of an apple, one decayed, and one not so. Both are altogether doomed, and only a miracle will give health to either; but one part is dead, the other is sluggishly in motion. A mortified frame has one limb dead, and the other, like a "*door upon its hinges*" (v. 14), sluggishly circulating life. A dead sinner has his dead part, and the part that seems to be alive. Now the Wise Man characterizes as the former, the part where the sinner has abandoned doctrine, or where the decay is upon the soul's intelligence. We do not think of such things. We do not imagine any other corruption than of the heart. But the Bible speaks of the head. There is an earlier and a later ruin. Like a poor child, that has been sick for weeks, and some day begins with delirious speeches, so impenitence mounts to the forehead. "They have set out in the way of Cain," says Jude (v. 11), "and poured themselves out in the error of Balaam for a reward, and perished in the GAIN SAYING of Core." There are other passages. Denying truth is a closing symptom. Principles, that were riveted in youth, come suddenly to be abandoned; as when the nurse shakes her head at the first flighty question. Men part

with a belief, and cease to be troubled by it. Other beliefs remain. Like the mortified body! It parts with one limb, and ceases to be troubled by it. Other limbs remain. In the dead limb is no restlessness of life; in the other limbs, a sluggish circulation. So of churches, less blameworthy perhaps, but where the intellect is settled: the Jew, who is easy about his faith: the Papist, when he is doctrinally satisfied: the caviller, defunct as to his creed: we may put all these dead limbs together. How are you going to revive them? "**Hope for a fool**" lies "**outside**" somewhere, where the intellect can be awaked. It a man says, he is done with Hell, and no longer believes in an atonement, it is the boundary set back (22:28). Give that man up that far. It is mortification that has set in. So of the hypocrite. He who says that he has no need to repent; or, though he is conscious of sin, that he has already repented; he who flatteringly assumes that he is established in the grace of a believer, Solomon quietly sums up with the rest, as "*wise in his own eyes.*" And then, taking the attribute as though it were a man within a man, he summarily declares, that "*hope for a fool*" must be found "*outside of him.*" "*Wise in his own eyes;*" not equal quite to *doctrinally astray*; for a poor heathen may be that, who has never been instructed in the gospel. It means rather exactly what it says, *self wise*; and is that state which is reached by the sinner in abandoning lights which he once possessed. "**Outside of;**" the preposition "*from.*" Comparatives are always formed by this preposition. All commentators, therefore, on this account imagine one, very reasonably, to be intended here. There is no verb, however. And there is no adjective. And there are no signs of the comparative degree. By great straining one might be supposed (see Deut. 14:2; Is. 10:10). But the natural Hebrew flows differently. The natural force would be, *Hope for a fool is from him.* That is so glaringly false, that it has turned scholars into this thought of a *comparative*. But *from* means "*outside of,*" and that in a way that clears up many Scriptures. For example, the English Version reads (Gen. 27:39), "Thy dwelling shall be (*of, Marg.* lit. *from*) the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven," when notoriously it was a rocky land. But read "*outside of,*"

and Esau will most graphically be described. "Thy dwelling shall be *outside* of the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven; and by thy sword shalt thou live, &c." Again, Micah 3:6, literally, "Night shall be unto you *from a vision* (meaning, evidently, *without a vision*), and it shall be dark to you from divining (plainly *without* divining, or, so as to be *without* a divination)." Jer. 48:45; "They that fled stood under the shadow of Heshbon *because of the force*" (E. V.), literally, "*from the force*." The meaning plainly is, "They that fled stood under the shadow of Heshbon *without strength*" (i. e., in a weak condition). We understand the Proverb to mean, that hope for a man of a visit from God's Holy Spirit lies in the sensitive part of him; that his reasonings are doing him no good; that his intellects are stages of death; and that "*hope for the fool*" must be "*outside of*" this spirit that has done the mischief.

But even our sensitive part comes up to be denounced,—under the name of "**sluggard**." Alas for us! how it has wronged us! It was strong once. It was all alive with conviction from our mother's teaching. It meant to repent. The Wise Man sweeps all by speaking of its miserable sloth. It is not without reasoning either. It trumps up false reasons. While the callous part lies dead, the sensitive part tosses and invents obstructions:—

13 The sluggard has been saying,—There is a lion in the way,

a lion amid the open squares.

14 The door turns round upon its hinge,
and a sluggard upon his bed.

13. The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets.

14. As the door turneth upon his hinges; so doth the slothful upon his bed.

The apple, if we could take a microscope, has a circulation of its juice all through the sounder part of it. But what does it avail? It is "**the door upon its hinge**." Death moves inward toward the unmortified limb all the time. It feels right, but the battle is going on. Part of the man has struck its flag. Part fights, and has no idea of defeat. The soul means fully to awake; but is first tossing with excuses. It dreams of being all right; and makes restless efforts to move; but it is "**the door upon its hinge**." The ceaseless circulation of the limb is a part

of its decline, and spreads the gangrene which it is thinking to oppose. “**Has been saying.**” This is the emphatic perfect. It “*has been*” so from the beginning. “**Turns;**” i. e., motion with no advance. “*The door*” moves constantly, but makes no progress.

“**The sluggard**” makes no progress, even under the most alluring offers:—

- 15 The sluggard has hid his hand in the dish.
He is too tired to bring it to his mouth
again.

- 16 The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes
than seven men who report back the taste.

15 The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth.

16 The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.

Millions are around him who have been converted, and who tell him of their joys. “**The dish**” has absolutely been prepared. He has helped to prepare it. He has gone through the studies of the cross. He did it in his infancy. He has gone to expense for Christ; and endured trouble for his conscience. He has thrust his very “**hand in the dish**,” and absolutely disengaged it from many earlier toys. And yet, out of mere sluggishness (that is the thought of the inspired man), “**he is too tired to bring it to his mouth again.**” From a different self-wisdom to that in verse 12th., he will not believe **reports**. The dozens around him, who have **tasted** “*the dish*,” cannot convince him of its pleasantness. And that wonder is enacted; of men assured of a pleasure; assured they ought to “*taste*” it: convinced they will “*taste*” it after a while; assured they will never cease to wonder that they never tasted it before; and assured by them who have themselves tasted it; and yet, with their very hand upon the dish, too tired to draw it back:

Instead of that, meddling with other people’s difficulties. If I am saved, mysteries will be left floating only over other men. With “*my hand in the dish*,” if I shrewdly snatch it out, the hardship of being lost is a puzzle only in other people’s histories. Most of the puzzles before the King (25:3) concern that sovereignty only in its relations with other immortal spirits. And yet the sluggard, “*like a door upon its hinge*,” busies him-

self eternally about these other existences. The faults of professors fever and toss him, and make him turn upon his bed. And yet why? If they are lost, is that his loss? And if they are saved, is it his responsibility? The Wise Man presses the folly of such impertinency:—

- 17 He takes a dog by the ears,
who, going up, gets himself roused about a
quarrel not his own.

17 He that passeth
by, and meddleth with
strife belonging not to
him, is like one that
taketh a dog by the
ears.

But now, still further. We who are ministers are accustomed to such unmeaningnesses as this:—‘*I do not consider it any excuse for me;* but, really, such a professor of the truth is strangely wanting in consistent conduct.’ And yet this, *which is no excuse for him*, is answer to a question in which you have urged him to repent. ‘I do not think,’ the impenitent man will say, ‘that it really is a reason; but such and such is but a poor encouragement for a sinner such as I.’ Now, if he really does not think that which he seems to think, and which he must needs think if he be at all replying to your question, what *does* he think; and where will he place as pertinent the reply he gives you? The Wise Man places it; and he places it among the characteristics of the sinner. He brands it as a holy trifling; and paints it as belonging to the soul; and as doing much mischief even to others in this period of decay:—

- 18 As a crazy man shooting
hot darts, arrows, and death,
19 so is a man, who has deceived his neigh-
bor,
and said,—Am I not in sport?

18 As a mad man,
who casteth firebrands,
arrows, and death,
19 So is the man
that deceiveth his
neighbour, and saith,
Am not I in sport?

The implication is, that he is not “*in sport*;” that the thing is half serious. “**Deceived.**” The trifling comes just here; that the man is trifling with himself. What he means when he says, ‘It is no real reason,’ is, that, in heart, he don’t believe it is; he knows better than he speaks. And, therefore, it is a prurient lust just to blurt cavils. The doctrine of the Proverbs is, that it is a fatal habit. They give reasons in texts that follow (vs.

20-28). But this present text teaches that such speeches may prove fatal on any spot; that they are filling the air with “**arrows**;” that they may hit where we never dream; that they may actually deceive our “**neighbor**;” and that, above all, as lying to our Great “*Neighbor*,” they are singularly mad, and that particularly in reply to the gospel.

They are mad specifically, the next Proverb explains; because they keep alive rebelliousness:—

- 20 Where no wood is, fire goes out;
- and by there being no tale-bearer strife
settles down.
- 20 Where no wood is,
there the fire goeth
out; so where *there* is
no talebearer, the strife
ceaseth.

This Great Mind makes his pictures of mosaic. He lays hold of sturdy Proverbs, that have their own wide truth, and sets them to suit his thought. “**Strife**” of all kinds is kept up by false gossip. My neighbor hears things of me that I never dreamed, and justly quarrels with me. That is his idea. Cut off from both of us the tampering of tattlers, and we would be bosom friends. Most cruel conceits, that will be carried to our graves, are keeping men estranged, that neither dreams of, though carried to the other. The Proverb, therefore, where Solomon seizes it, had world-wide compass. He fits it to religion. He means, that the utterance of cavils spreads them; that the man who gossips against the cross, deals death. He may be half in fun. He is a madman. “**Where no wood is, fire goes out; and by there being no talebearer;**” i. e., no curious doubt; no venturing complaint against the Majesty of Heaven; no gadding around with arguments partially in jest; the listener is spared, and the man himself kept closer to his Maker.

Because, say what we will, cavils are *not* in jest. They are the outgrowth of impenitence. They are the spores that carry the infection from the “**contentious man**.” Both the Proverbs that follow mean that the heart is open to them, like the skin for the infectious spores. The first speaks of it as on “**fire**.” The second speaks of it as on edge with a greedy appetite. The world likes cavilling. The objections that we moot are welcomed by the sinner, and will smite upon congenial ears:—

- 21 Coal to live coals, and wood to fire,
and a contentious man to kindle strife.
22 The words of a tale-bearer are dainty
morsels;
and they go down the chambers of the
belly.
- 21 As coal are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.
22 The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

“Coal to live coals.” It is rare, perhaps, that the order is considered. It is not,—“live coals to coal.” It answers, therefore, many apologies. The caviller may say, that he is only trifling—that he is not angrily hostile. Neither does this sentence say it. It does not impeach him as being a “live coal.” The cold cavil of the skeptic might fall dead like the black “coal” out of the mine. But this Proverb and the next speak of his listeners as on “fire.” The ear of the corrupt is waiting for temptation. And, like the black mass out of the mountain, he may be ever so cool; there is a hungering “fire” ready to be kindled. “As coal to live coals.” The Proverb speaks of the dead material. He who floats cavils in the air might do it harmlessly in heaven; but, on the earth, in the midst of the fires of sin, it is hungered for “to kindle strife.” V. 22. Nay, hungered for as a “dainty!” This we should remember. There is philosophy in the thought;—that what moves us so much is not an influence that can be indifferent. It is a warning against common gossip, that men like it so, and, therefore, it must inwardly corrupt. And so of skeptic gossip. We call it trifling; but why do men like it so? Why do I do so much of it? Why do men listen to me so? If it be a matter of indifference, why does it spread round the lost like death round the plague-patient? Why does it begin to issue, like spores, when I break out with the pestilence? This is the meaning of the Proverb. “The words of a talebearer are dainty morsels.” Men like them. Therefore, do not utter them. You like them. Therefore you utter them. Anything must do serious harm that is so loved when it is uttered. And, therefore, whatever your professions may be; though you pretend to love the truth, do not cavil; for, though men may not think so, they like it. It goes “down the chambers of the belly.”

For what is love to truth in a poor impenitent?—

- 23** Silver dross spread on some earthenware
fragment
are burning lips and an evil heart.
- 23 Burning lips, and
a wicked heart, are
like a potsherd covered
with silver dross.

Alleged love to truth, without the reality, is the subject of the next six verses. This first Proverb of the six has the mildest affirmation. “**Burning lips;**” i. e., warm affectionate utterance. The other five denounce it as a deceit; but this one merely pictures it. “**Silver dross;**” not even a thin leaf of the metal. “**On some earthenware fragment;**” not even on a whole dish. The other five imply mischief. This one exclaims at something merely worthless. The good impenitent; who is kind even to the church; behold his picture! Are not my gifts precious? Is not my gold as bright as the Christian’s? Are not my bricks part of the church building? There is a terrible compass in the passage just as it is uttered. No lost man can do good. He can be made to do it by an overruling power. So could a poor potsherd be forced to save life. But no lost man can do good as of the first intent, and for this reason:—he undoes all that he does. If he give gifts, his example is a greater seduction because of his virtue. He prays! Well, why not then repent? He builds a thousand churches! Then mark what an insidious snare. The nearer we climb to the light, and stay in darkness; the worse, in some attitudes, our life; and the harder to resist our influence for impenitence.

But not only so. There is “**a deceit**” always. We do not love the truth. We are only pretending:—

- 24** A hater dissembles with his lips,
and lays away deceit within him.
- 25** Because he makes his voice kind, do not
trust him;
for seven abominations are in his heart.
- 26** Hatred covers with a deceit
the evil of which shall be laid bare in the
great assembly.
- 24 He that hateth
dissembleth with his
lips, and layeth up de-
ceit within him :
25 When he speaketh
fair, believe him not ;
for there are seven ab-
ominations in his heart.
26 Whose hatred is
covered by deceit, his
wickedness shall be
shewed before the
whole congregation.

“**Hatred**” is known to *deceive*. If “**hatred**” is known to *deceive*, then, the deeper the “**hatred**,” the more insidious, one might pronounce it likely, would be the “**deceit**.” Why should a man say he really loves the Church, when he is not a Chris-

tian? Why should he pretend to? When he is guilty of the main hating act, viz., rejecting the Redeemer, why dream of being supposed to love Him? He is flecked with the family likeness of insidious "*deceit*;" and by that very mark should be the more convicted. All sinners make pretence; even the most infamous. All have their glozing speeches. All talk warmly of God. The Bandit gives to Him like the high moralist. "**Within him**," means deep in the heart. It is deceit that grows fast within us. "**Because he makes his voice kind**." Notice, that even the police come to understand this. If a prisoner talk good, policemen suspect him. "*Because*;" not "*when*" (E. V.). The worst man will often be the best spoken; and that for the very reason that there "**are seven abominations in his heart**." Good deeds, accordingly, may be a cloak, and may continue so to the **Grand Assembly**. Notice, then, a sort of paradox. "**The evil of [them]!**" implying that they must be an "*evil*." This had been already taught (v. 1). But how can they be an "*evil*," if they remain as **covered** till the Day of Judgment? A good man, for example, as all men thought him, has been a communicant till death. He was the very highest in the church. He prayed like an angel. He gave like a prince. He was meek like a beggar. What harm could the man do? He may at heart have been a hater, for so it seems to be declared (vs. 24, 25); and in life deceitful (v. 23). All that seems to be very evident. He was most awfully his own deceiver. But, life having been finally got through without a suspicion of his falseness, where can the harm lie? Alas! hidden! that is the very statement. It will lie a concealed thing until the Day of Judgment. It is deep and dark, so that sooner he will never know it; of so insinuating a breath that, like the pest-house, it may be as sunny as the open air. It is like the seeds of the contagion, *naught*: who even dare conceive them? But all the more are they worthy to be revealed; richer in their light, and all the more, when the time comes, will the King digest them (25:5). All the more will He show their subtlety. For "*Hatred covers with a deceit, the evil of which shall be laid bare in the great assembly.*"

The writer then closes the chapter with two general propo-

sitions. First, no man is a deceiver without deceiving himself. And, second, no man deceives without mischief to himself and others. First :—

- 27 The digger of a pit falls into it; and upon him who rolls a stone it returns back.

27 Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein; and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.

Whoever is uttering cavils, even though they be in sport, is shooting hot darts. So the nineteenth verse informs us. He is **rolling a stone**, which is in danger of crushing his neighbor. The present Proverb says,—it will recoil back. “**The digger of a pit falls into it.**” That is not true secularly. Nero may dig a hundred, and die in his bed. But in religion it is as true as the light. The miracle of ransom is an exception to every law. Trouble may come upon our Substitute; but, barring that, mischief comes back with certainty, and probably in kind. With whatsoever measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again (Matt. 7:2). “**The digger of a pit falls into it, and upon him who rolls a stone, it returns back.**”

Moreover, it is impossible to deceive *hurtlessly*. We may do it secularly, and do good by deceiving an enemy (Josh. 8:2); but it is impossible spiritually. Deceit cannot, like phosphorescent light, play harmlessly over the spirit of our neighbor :—

- 28 A lying tongue hates its victims; and a flattering mouth works ruin.

28 A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.

“**Hates.**” This has a peculiar meaning. It is frequent that we *hate* a man, in this sense of hating, whom we passionately love. Because one’s greatest victim is himself, and surely he loves himself. The meaning of this *hating* is brought out well in the twenty-ninth chapter (v. 24). “Whoso is partner with a thief *hateth his own soul.*” It is a strong expression. “He that spareth his rod *hateth his son*” (13:24). It balances the second clause. It is a consequential *hate*; that is, the harm in which real *hate* would inure. The second clause is more express. That kindly falsehood which encourages instead of cavils; which speaks too **flatteringly** of a sinner’s hopes; is

under the genus of deceit; and, as “*a lying tongue, hates its victims.*”

CHAPTER XXVII.

NEXT, the Wise Man grapples with the Great Deceit—our procrastinating promises. It is of the species of the last clause (26 : 28), viz., of “*a flattering tongue;*” and is put with wonderful expertness. “*Praise not thyself.*” Nothing could be more graphic. The sinner is utterly corrupt. He has not turned a wheel for his Redeemer. He cannot be brought to do it. He does not *praise himself* in respect to to-day; but he *praises himself* “*in the morrow.*” He is thoroughly convinced that he will do right just the day after this. This is our translation. We might translate “*Boast not thyself*” (E. V.); but that has grown too idiomatic. It hides the meaning of *self-praise*. The next verse, too, would be too isolated. The verb translated, “*Boast not thyself*” (E. V.), is the Hithpael of the verb translated “*praise*” (E. V.) in the verse that follows. It is important to keep the two together. Therefore we translate:—

- i PRAISE not thyself in the morrow;
for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. BOAST not thyself of
to-morrow; for thou
knowest not what a
day may bring forth.

“*In.*” *In* to-day the soul knows that it is impenitent; but “*in the morrow*” it means to be a Christian. It *praises itself* as though it already were so, and it *flatters itself* (26 : 28) beyond a doubt; because its worthlessness to-day is the very thing that will nullify the promise. The second clause is very philosophical. The writer’s pen could hardly have touched more wittingly. This is just the fact,—Christ may convert us. He might convert us on “*the morrow.*” It is true, the Wise Man says (29 : 20), that one’s promise rather hurts the hope of such a result. “*Seest thou a man hasty in his words? Hope for a fool is outside of him*” (like 26 : 12). Still light *might* break in to-morrow. The text strikes, however, the very centre of the fact. *Who knows* about it? We may be dead. Blank uncer-

tainty is a fact : and this is what the passage first appeals to. “*Praise not thyself in the morrow ; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*” But now more :

Not only are events uncertain, but we, who essay to fix them, are the last persons competent to be the judge :—

- 2** Let another praise thee, and not thine own mouth ; a stranger, and not thine own lips. 2 Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth ; a stranger, and not thine own lips.

“**Praise thee, &c.**” Of course secularly beautiful; an excellent catholic Proverb. But, *in situ*, Solomon is still theologizing. “*Praise* ;” the same word as “*boast*” (E. V., v. 1). So we have already stated. Solomon knows that “**another**” would not “*praise*” us. We are conscious in respect to ourselves; and yet a “**stranger**” (and both nouns mean “*stranger*”), who had never seen us before : a Pagan, if we would just tell him of our case; and he could catechise us, and ask,—Sir, how often have you had this purpose ?—would not take an hour to decide, and to decide against us. If we were to tell him, We have had this purpose for forty years ; we have been *praising ourselves as of the morrow*, each morrow, that is every day : we verily believed our promise each time ; we candidly hatched up the flattery ; and each day, when we boasted of the next, dwarfed nothing of our confidence ; a brute Hottentot would tell us,—Then, Sir, you never will repent. And, as the actual fact, *in natura*, we never will. Put out of thought the incalculable miracle, the supervention of grace, and we are past life. Our promises are false ; and they are worse than false, for they waste our heart, and carry us the more probably to a final ruin.

Because we tend downward. That is the next idea. Great “**trouble** ;” which seems to be a means of grace, and which sinful sufferers bear better under the thought that it is itself salvation, the next Proverb speaks of as having weight, like “**a stone**,” or like “**sand**.” “The wicked is thrust lower by his evil” (14:32). Men hold in reserve their death-bed ; and, as the crown of all “**trouble**,” think that that will save them. Solomon declares the opposite. “Though thou bray a fool in a mortar, etc.” (v. 22) :—

A stone is heavy, and the sand is weighty ;
and the trouble of a fool is heavier than
they both.

³ A stone *is* heavy,
and the sand weighty ;
but a fool's wrath *is*
heavier than them
both.

“Heavy ;” literally, *heaviness*. “Weighty ;” literally, *weight*. The “stone” never rests. It *weighs* ; i. e., it presses. It exerts force downward eternally. “The sand,” through the finest gauze, would seek to steal downward, though it were for six thousand years. So the sinner. He thinks that “trouble” is lifting him. To-morrow will bring him to Christ. He sees where he may *praise himself* by to-morrow. When, not only the life that is to recuperate itself is fled, but the “trouble” that is to call it back lies “heavy” on it like “*a stone*” upon the plain.

How sad ! And many a soul, thus doomed, will say,—‘How cruel !’ This is just what the writer says :—

4 Wrath is cruelty, and anger is a flood :
and who is able to stand before jealousy ?

⁴ Wrath *is* cruel, and
anger *is* outrageous ;
but who *is able* to stand
before envy ?

It is not we that make the gravitation. It is God that makes it. We sin to-day, and He sees that we sink lower to-morrow. It is a law of His nature. It is one of the great pains of sin. “Anger,” which “*is cruelty* ;” i. e., which works direr dooms than anything actually *cruel* ; needs but the occasion of our sins, to do what the Apostle describes when he speaks of *God giving us up* (Rom. 1 : 28). It is like the King, unsearchable (25 : 3). It is like “*a flood*,” “*outrageous*” (E. V.); literally, “*an outpouring*.” Even the “*jealousy*” of the King, or antagonisms of the mildest shape, are things before which, when born a sinner, no mortal can even begin “*to stand*.” How idle, therefore, to *praise ourselves* one day more than another (v. 1) !

And therefore :—

5 Better is rebuke made openly
than love concealed.

⁵ Open rebuke *is*
better than secret love.

6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend ;
and the kisses of an enemy are many.

⁶ Faithful *are* the
wounds of a friend ;
but the kisses of an
enemy *are* deceitful.

If God has these *cruelties* ahead (explained in the reverent sense), it would be wicked to unveil them, if it were but “to

torment us before the time" (Matt. 8:29). If being "made openly" gains nothing, sheer pitifulness should let them sleep. But Solomon is touching all the points. He has told us of deceit (26:28); he has told us of self flattery (in the second clause, 26:28). He replaces it with what is better, "Praise not thyself in the morrow" (v. 1). "Thou canst not tell" (second clause). Nay thou *canst* tell, that even "*trouble*" will weigh thee down like the "*sand*" upon the field (v. 3). *Cruel* seems this deadliness that belongs to our state by nature (v. 4). But, then, there is a chance. And it is a chance, not by being self-flattered, but by being roused. Thus, then, the present Proverb—"Rebuke made openly is better than *ove conc alede*." As doom will travel, public menace is better than secret pity; Sinai, than Ebal; boldly to let loose thunders, than, merely, not to afflict willingly. Because, rough treatment alarms the stupid (see next Proverbs); because, "*faithful are the wounds of a friend, and the kisses of an enemy are many*"; because, there is a method of escape, and *rough speaking* may be as with the words of Joseph (Gen. 42:7). The meaning of both Proverbs is, that we have "*honey*" enough (25:16); that we have pitifulnesses enough (29:21); that "*the kisses of an enemy are many*"; and that the great means of bringing the lost to God is, not to encourage them about to-morrow, but to shake them about today; that being the epoch both of hope and peril.

Therefore he says :—

- 7 A full soul loathes a honey-comb;
but, as to the hungry soul, every bitter
thing is sweet.

Who ever trapped the bear when "full" of honey? This "**honeycomb**" is hope (25:27). Who ever roused a "**soul**" already cloyed with it? If we could break the hive! Let Sinai thunder, and the "**soul**" will listen. Could we destroy these ideas about to-morrow (v. 1)! and *lay bare reproof* (v. 5)! and show the man the cruelty of wrath (v. 4)! and get him roused as to his lost condition! then "**every bitter thing** [would at once be] **sweet**." The hard morsel of penitence, and the "**bitter herbs**" of an immediate flight, his "**soul**" will turn to, if

we get him broken of his flatteries, and convinced that it is not absolutely certain that he will ever be delivered.

This is hard though :—

- 8 As a bird is shaken from its nest;
so a man is shaken from his place.

8 As a bird that wan-
dereth from her nest;
so is a man that wan-
dereth from his place.

He has been impenitent a score of years. It is his “nest.” He never lived in any other. What a miracle that he should leave his “nest”! The “bird” must be “shaken” from it. See the parent linnet, how he pecks his little one over the edge. What do we know about the wing? We have lain in the sticks and the dung of unbelief, till it is death to us to try anything else. This is the terror: and God knows it. “As the eagle stirreth up her nest” (Deut. 32:11), and counts it all tenderness to toss out her child, God tears at our quiet hopes, and, though it is death at the beginning, we soon find ourselves accustomed to the air. “Is shaken.” Gesenius gives, *to nod; i. e., to move up and down, to and fro; to be “shaken”:* I mean, this is his primary meaning. Can anything be more felicitous? How sad long burials of these exquisite inspirations! This one is grandly experimental. The sinner postpones continually, because it is a habit. He is settled in the “nest,” and, having been born there, he hates to move. It seems hard just yet to rest his faith upon the air.

The real secret, however, is, that it is by a new taste that the old one must be overcome :—

- 9 Oil and incense delight the heart,
and sweetness its friend, from the dictate
of appetite.

9 Ointment and per-
fume rejoice the heart;
so doth the sweetness
of a man's friend by
hearty counsel.

The old “bird” may topple the young one (v. 8), and that represents “open rebuke” (v. 5); which may shake the impenitent out of his carelessness. But more is required, or ever the soul actually begins its flight. There must be the expulsive power of a new affection. “Oil and incense delight the heart.” Why? “From the dictate of appetite.” And so, “sweetness;” i. e., in the instance of the gospel, spiritual “sweetness,” or

holiness; must delight “*its friend* ;” or, as we might translate it, “*its fellow*,” by the same “*dictate of appetite*.” It must be a square clear taste, like that for “*oil*” or “*incense*.” The structure of the sentence makes “*delights*” to be understood in the second clause; and, “*from the dictate of appetite*,” to belong also to the first. “*Dictate*” is literally “counsel.” “*Appetite*” is literally “*soul*” (23:2). It does not mean “*appetite*” in a bad sense, but in all senses. The soul is not going to jump out of the nest (of impenitence) till a “*dictate of appetite*” “*delights*” it with the “*sweetness*” of the gospel. “*Sweetness its friend* ;” i. e., “*sweetness delights its friend* ;” that is, *holiness delights its fellow* (viz., some being that is also holy) “*from the dictate of appetite*.” Proverbs (vs.) 17, 19, and 21, take up and expand this idea. “*Iron is united (welded) by iron; so, in the instance of a man, the tie is the countenance of his friend*” (v. 17). “*As water, surface to surface; so heart, the man to the man*” (v. 19). “*A fining pot for silver, and a furnace for gold, and a man as to his acts of praise*.” We will come to those in turn; but, as iron welds with iron, and water runs its surfaces together, so heart, under like tastes, welds with heart. These tastes are the universal solder. They not only bind together, but by exercise they purify and grow. What “*a fining pot*” is to “*silver*,” and what “*a furnace*” is to “*gold*,” such his common *praisings* are (which are but the expressions of his *tastes*) to refine, or, if filthy, to destroy a man. “*Its* ;” referring to “*sweetness*.” This solves a grammatic difficulty. Commentators have supposed it impersonal, and translated “*one's friend*” (Böttcher), or (E. V.) “*a man's friend*,” to clear the obstacle. The impersonal sense would not need a pronoun. The version above requires it. We have therefore the grammatic rights. And, as “*sweetness*” is masculine, the gender in the suffix entirely agrees. The whole is an important doctrine. Men are loath to start (v. 8), and hard to be attracted from self-confident intentions (v. 7). They are, therefore, shaken by reproof (v. 5); but the law, though a schoolmaster to assist them to Christ, yet can never save them. Their want is a new taste (vs. 7, 9). *Braying a fool in a mortar* (v. 22) cannot bring that. “*Oil and incense delight the heart* ;”

so, sweetness must find its mate, and that by "*a dictate of appetite.*"

The Mate that must mate the Christian, and blend with him in this common sweetness, is a Mate made so by this sweetness itself. Water, runs surface to surface, quite unlike rock or earth when they come together; so "heart" blends, man with man (v. 19). "He that doeth the will of God the same is my mother and sister and brother." The Proverb that follows doubtless has a secular sense. It means that "**a neighbour near is better than a brother far off.**" That sense is capital. No experience more common in life! But here the meaning is a religious one. Do not resort to man; resort to Christ. The other fledglings in the nest cannot help you. Your call must be from the outside. The whole ministry of *brothers*, where Hell is to be escaped, is here made naught by the side of the Nearer "*Neighbor*":—

- 10 Thine own friend and thy father's friend 10 Thine own friend,
forsake not; and thy father's friend,
neither go into thy brother's house in the forsake not, neither go
day of thy ruin; into thy brother's
for better is a neighbor that is near, than a house in the day of thy
brother far off. calamity: *for better is*
 a neighbour that is
 near, than a brother
 far off.

"**Forsake;**" as can be done even by the impenitent. Our baptismal place is one to which we have been reared by generations. "**Thy father's friend;**" with all He did for thee years ago. Do not throw all away. And do not do it under the impulse of going "**into thy brother's house.**" You cannot shelter there; even if he were a believer. You have a Great "*Neighbor*." He has been kind to the family. He is offended by the countless ways in which you trust to kindred more than to Him. And in these great matters of *taste*, in which heart welds heart, He is nearer to you than any kin. His jealousy is extreme. "*If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple*" (Lu. 14: 26).

His honor, too, is involved in your doing well. The next Proverb asserts a whole class of statements. Like all Proverbs

it is polysophical, and means all that it can say. It means that all intelligences are bound in one; that all superiors are disgraced by those beneath them; that the father may be disgraced by the “son;” that Christ is disgraced by His brothers; and God by His creatures; and the Church by lost men; that these four are all honored when men are saved: not that God will not come out glorious at the last; but that His honor suffers; that the world is full of cavils; and that His “son” makes His heart glad, and gives Him somewhat to answer when he comes, a poor broken-hearted child, and accepts the gospel. Now any or all of these may be fitted to the supervening text :—

- 11 My son, be wise, and make my heart glad.
Then I have somewhat to answer him that reproaches me.

¹¹ My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproacheth me.

“I have somewhat to answer him, &c.;” literally, *I may answer my reproacher a word* (see Ps. 119:42). The sentiment contained is rife in the following passages (Ps. 25:11; 130:4; Is. 48:9; Rom. 9:23; 1 Tim. 1:16).

Balancing the different reasons, Solomon, as he usually does, puts in the motives for self along with those of affection. There seems to be great care taken in this filling-out policy (1:10, etc.; 4:20, etc.; 9:1 etc., 13, etc.); because the passage read in the synagogue may then be a full view on each sabbatical occasion :—

- 12 The subtle has seen the evil; he is hid.
The simple have pushed on; they are punished.

¹² A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.

- 13 Take a man's garment because he has become surety for a stranger;
and, on account of a strange woman, make him give a pledge.

¹³ Take his garment that is surely for a stranger, and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

These texts have been searched through before (see 6:1; 18:1). “**The subtle** ;” one of the names for a saint (1:4). “**Has seen** ;” the emphatic perfect. “**Is hid** ;” also perfect. A saint is a saint, in that this entire covering or hiding of him has been done. “**The simple** ;” literally, *the laid open*. “**Have pushed on** ;” that reckless *plunging forward* that has been so often imputed to the perishing (18:1). Nevertheless, with coolness too (v. 13); for there is a care to have balanced lights. The

sinner directly refuses. He directly rejects pardon. This madness has been painted (11:15) under the type of "surety." We have been involved by our parent (6:1); we have been involved with a Friend; He has offered to release; we ought to urge Him to attend to it (6:3). Instead of that, we deliberately renew. The Wise Man says, "**Take**" the "garment" of such a man. Give him nothing without "**a pledge**." His circumstances are bad. He has not a filament of hope; nay, deliberately accepts his ruin. Stand from under him. He is the bold embodiment of a bankrupt and ruined man.

These side-features being put in to fill out the face, the Wise Man returns to the more immediate matter of the passage, viz., our "**Neighbor**," and our being united to Him by a kindred taste (v. 9). We cannot reach this taste by talking. The object of the passage is to show how inward it is, and how impossible to pump it into being by any outward demonstrations:—

14 He that blesses his neighbor with a loud voice, rising up early in the morning, it shall be accounted a curse in him. ¹⁴ He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.

A passage afterward pictures the sinner as moulded by the *praises* he offers (v. 21). Here there is the guard that it must be other than mere boisterous speech. We cannot pump religion into us at a prayer meeting. "**Blesses.**" The word (Pihel) means *praises* or *adores*, in the higher and more worshiping sense. No better way to show our *taste* (v. 9); but then it must not be, "**Lord, Lord**" (Luke 6:46), in mere noisefulness. "**A curse;**" as though he had *cursed*. "**In;**" literally "*to*." We did not say, "*to*," because it would mean *on* him, or *falling on* him, whereas **5** means *in respect to*, or *in his instance*. We get the sense, therefore, by saying, "*in him.*" This would be a text to look to in preaching against mere sabbath-day professors.

If such would be "*a curse,*" how full is the impenitent sinner of every bitterness. Solomon brings in his Angry—"Woman"—Proverb. He does it on all occasions, where intolerable odiousness is the thing to be depicted:—

- 15 A continual dropping in a very rainy day, and a contentious woman, are alike.
 16 He that hides her has hid the wind; and must call upon the very oil of his right hand.
- 15 A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.
 16 Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself.

“Continual.” It comes from a verb to *thrust*, and refers to that *thrusting* sound with which a drop comes which is close upon another one. So are the scoldings of a shrew—“woman.” This feature is well assigned to sin: it is *all* so disagreeable. Worldly disagreeables rest; sometimes good, sometimes troublesome. Sin is *all* odious, like the woman’s eternal tongue. The fifteenth was intended to imply this; for if a man’s very *praisings* are cursings, what good tongue can he have about him? The Wise Man is about to show the gentle influences in conversion; and, in order to paint their power, he not only tells us how all other things fail (vs. 14, 22), but how great the achievement. It is the repression of an intolerable tongue. Who ever accomplished it? It is the grappling of “the wind.” These are wonderful images of sin. “He that hides her, has hid the wind:” so difficult is it to get hold of sin; and so viewless and illusory. It yields everywhere, and yet nowhere. It escapes on one side, while we grasp it on the other. It is a mockery to talk of strength, and say that we must “call upon the very oil of [our] right hand;” for this symbol of high force but taunts the sufferer; while the bad tongue, like the heart’s desperate iniquity, is beyond the reach of any form of power that its victim can originate against it.

These efforts aside, the bland gospel now enters the theatre. Conversion is a new taste (Ez. 18:31). It is a taste for the “sweetness” (v. 9), here talked of as in the “countenance” of the “Friend.” This is the great moulding power that changes our nature (1 Jo. 2:15); and, moreover, it is the great moulding fact that unites us in our lives:—

- 17 Iron is welded by iron; so, for a man, the tie is the face of his friend.
- 17 Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

Such is a most specific type. “Iron is welded by iron.”

That is, we must bring a “*face*” of “*iron*” (not of tin; not of brass; not of wood; but, by the very necessities of its nature, of “*iron*”); and strictly, a “*face*” of it; so that face may meet face (as of the water in the 19th verse); or they cannot run or mould themselves together. “*Iron is welded by iron; so, for a man, the tie is the face of his friend.*” Fit a face of iron, red hot, to a face of iron, also hot, and force them hard upon each other, and thus you weld them. Bring a man face to face with his neighbor, and let them be warmed by a common taste, and, though one of them be God Himself, this will weld them. A man is converted by his eyes. “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee” (Job 42:6). A new man has spiritual eyes. The “*face*” is the outlook of character. We see our “*friend*” in his “*face*.” And it is in this common seeing: he seeing us in our character; we seeing him in his; that “*the tie*” binds. “*The tie,*” figuratively speaking, “*is the face of [our] friend.*” “*Welded.*” All commentators make this another verb. To do so they have to change it, and make exceptional forms. Ours derives itself grammatically. It was shunned for lack of point. But the “*faces*” of the 19th verse and of this 17th, when once thought of together, flash in the light. Moreover, *countenances* are not “*sharpened*” (E. V.) in any intelligible or rightly-figurative way. The nexus of the chapter suits our meaning; and altogether it will hardly break down, or be too summarily dismissed. “*Tie,*” the noun from the verb in the first clause. The face of the “*iron*” is actually the “*tie;*” and so the “*face*” of the “*friend*,” i. e., his character, is the uniting bond between him and his neighbor. Not of *a man*, but “*for*,” i. e., “*as to*.” The genitive is not the construction; and “*as to*” is often the sense with no presence of a ȝ (Class XIII).

If seeing the face of our “*Friend*” be our great pleasure, and the great “*tie*” that unites us; then **watching** that “*Friend*,” and keeping Him within our reach, is the great art of life:—

- 18 He that guards the fig tree eats its fruit; and he that stands watch over his lord is honored. 18 Whoso keepeth the fig-tree shall eat the fruit thereof; so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.

The **guarding** of anything depends upon its nature. The **guarding** of a “**fig tree**” is simply to protect “**its fruit**.” We cannot *guard* its growing, or *guard* its fruit bearing, in any sense of asserting for it its natural laws. The best thing we can do is to let that all alone. We cannot *guard* the Almighty. According to the figure of a “**fig tree**” we have a “**fruit**” in Him. We can *guard* that. If the “**sweetness**” of our “**Neighbor**” be “**oil and incense**” (v. 9), we can **stand watch** that we keep our share of Him. “The Lord is my portion, saith my soul.” And, if all I have is that, I should watch it as the Duke does his diamonds. Rolling his couch to the vault, the mad Richmond makes a covert of his body. The bauble gems drink his life. If heaven is the “**face**” of the Most High, the sinner’s art is to get where he can see it, and to keep where he can see it, and to mount guard over it. For though the Almighty needs no defence, we do, in that position for His love, which is to be our joy forever.

That love is our “**tie**” (v. 17); and it is a very perfect one:—

19 As water, face to face ;
so heart, man to man.

19 As in water face
answereth to face ; so
the heart of man to
man.

If I bring rock together, it abuts, but there is no mixture. If I pour sand together, it meets, but I may trace the parcels if they differ; but “**water**” is a fine picture of the “**heart**.” It has been seized upon by the poet. Two sparkling drops, as they touch, instantly are blended. All piety is of that type. “**Water, face to face,**” is the “**heart, man to man.**” “*Iron*” was a grand emblem (v. 17). Electrically, and chemically, and atomically, it knows its fellow; and, warmed by the genial heat, they become absolutely the one “*iron*.” But “**water**” so inter-blends! Pressure and heat and smoothness are not demanded. It welds at a touch. And, sinking into one, the very corners of the drop are open indiscriminately to every particle. “*Face*,” a Hebrew of wide sense; *surface*; or *front*; or *part*, of any kind, by which one thing may abut another. “**Water, face to face,**” means *water simply touching*. “**Heart**” means, *wise heart* (17:16), and accords with *piety*. A man, not re-

deemed, is pronounced “*without heart*” (15 : 21). God is said to *give heart* (Deut. 29 : 3), and to *increase heart* (Ps. 119 : 32), and, still more specifically, to *weigh out hearts* (21 : 2; 24 : 12). The sentence, therefore, is very exact. “*As water, face to face,*” so “*man*,” not nakedly, but “*man*” in a certain condition. “*Man*” naturally is the *Termagant Woman* (v. 15); a thing utterly odious; a thing impossible to live with; a nuisance that is to fester in the Pit; but “*man*,” with the gift of a “*heart*,” is like the waters that bespread our planet, at home through all of it, mingling wherever they meet, and going back to their fountain in the heaven, and mingling with that, with the most perfect and understood communion.

Communion, however, lies in taste (v. 9). Solomon is ever dragging that back. Our *welding* is by the “*face*,” like “*iron*” (v. 17). Our attraction is by the “*eyes*.” The “*face*” being the emblem for character, and the *eye* for the vision that discerns it, our portion in the skies is God’s character. Eternal ages are to witness two things,—great enjoyment of God’s character, and great growth by looking at it. He that “*guards the fig tree*” is, the one that guards God’s character; learns to look at it; strives to brighten it; for, such is “*the fountain of life, and in [His] light shall we see light*” (Ps. 36 : 9). The writer, therefore, goes on to say, that this increase will be eternal. The *eye* will never be satisfied. It will never be satisfied in Hell, and will never be satisfied in Heaven. The *eye* is the avenue of growth. That growth will be eternal. The *eye*, in the vilenesses of Hell, and also in the sweetmesses of Heaven, will take in more and more; and will raise or sink us through eternal ages. To express all this, the Wise Man chooses the symbol of the grave:—

20 Sheol and Abaddon are never full;
and the eyes of man are never full.

20 Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.

“**A**baddon;” *destruction; waste and death* in every form. These terms are elsewhere used for anything insatiate (30 : 16). Solomon describes a great psychological law; that the mind by its very nature sees, and by all its seeings will grow, either in one way or the other.

He repeats the thought. He calls in another image. He involves the *feeling* more, along with mere *seeing*. He makes the feeling to be expressed by what a man shall “*praise*.” If a man shall *admire* or “*praise*” bad things, he will grow in badness. If a man shall admire and “*praise*” good things, he will grow in holy living. This influence is very deep, like the “*furnace*” to an ore of “*gold*.” He has said, in the fourteenth verse, that loud *praising* shall be counted like *cursing*. There must be no counterfeit. But genuine “*praise*;” like seeing the “*sweetness of a friend*,” and loving it (vs. 9, 10); or like seeing the sweetness of sin, and admiring that; are the great secret of our increase in either way. Psychologically, nothing could be more exact. We will not stay upon the discussion. But consciousness is a continual stream, and the *admirings* that it contains, are all the influences for growth either upon the saint or upon the sinner. So the Proverb:—

- 21 A fining pot for silver, and a furnace for gold;
so a man under his acts of praise.

*21 As the fining-pot
for silver, and the fur-
nace for gold; so is a
man to his praise.*

This, of course, makes the influence very thorough. As the “*fining-pot*” digests “*silver*,” and the “*furnace*” works upon the “*gold*;” so *praising* anything moulds and affects the spirit. “*Praise*” (E. V.). All seem to imagine that a man’s *being praised*, i. e., the praises that he *receives*, are the things that try him. This reduces the whole to the dangerousness of being *praised*. This, at most, teaches, that like “*gold*” a good character will be found out by how much it will endure of “*praise*.” Now the difficulties of this are many; first, the sense is narrow, where the other aphorisms are broad; second, the sense is isolated, where the other aphorisms are linked together; but third, and still more decisive of our claim, the noun is from a Pihel formation; it has hence a more *active* shape; and far more rightfully means “*praise*” as given by a man, than that which he receives. The word occurs but once in the Bible; and, therefore, no other instance can decide the signification. “*Under*,” or “*according to*;” literally “*to the mouth of*.” “*According to*,” however, often translates it (Ex. 16:

16; Prov. 12:8). The meaning is, a man's taste; or, as that is an inactive term, a man's *praisings*; i. e., his tastes put into action; work back upon him as thoroughly as "a *fining-pot*" upon an ore of "*silver*."

Now, nothing else will work upon him. A Proverb has already said, that loud worship will not (v. 14). That Proverb exhausts all ideas of ritual or public service, or of going to the stake, or of loud profession of every sort. It is a text for sermons on the futility of outward services to carry a man to heaven. Its twin Proverb comes next:—

- 22** Though thou bray a fool in a mortar in
the midst of grits with a pestle,
his folly shall not depart from him.

²² Though thou
shouldst bray a fool in
a mortar among wheat
with a pestle, yet will
not his foolishness de-
part from him.

Religion is an affair of *taste* (vs. 7-9). A man's *taste* saves him. How can you breed a *taste* by what is outward? A man supposes that to be confronted by death would make him believe; or, to be overborne by sorrow. How can a death-bed breed a *taste*? Solomon wishes to declare that it is the South wind that carries away the traveler's cloak, the wind of gentle grace; that the bold tempest cannot wrench it; and, therefore, he seizes on a text intentionally extreme. "**Though thou bray a fool in a mortar;**" though thou rack him on the wheel; though thou burn him at the stake; how can that breed a *taste*? The eye of his understanding must be enlightened; and dying, which men look to for living, is like the loud worship (v. 14); it has no fitness for the result. It may melt a man with fear, so that he counterfeit belief; but how can it "shine into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the **FACE** (v. 17) of Jesus" (2 Cor. 4:6)?

This "*face*" (v. 17), therefore, is our "*Fig Tree*" (v. 18); and the Wise Man, warmed by this homely fancy, expands it. "**The grass**" on the hills (v. 25) is perishable. It **appears** at a certain season, and must be fed then, and not afterward. "**Riches are not for ever**" (v. 24), but throb with the pulse of a temporary provision. If our fruitage is in these *tastes*, we must pluck them as we go. The *eye* (v. 20) cannot be crowded with its food, but must be fed all along (Lev. 22:30). The

grave is not more insatiate than our tastes (v. 20); and yet the manna falls each day. The poet, in a farming scene, throws all this together; and urges a daily thrift, rather than a stroke for life when we come to die:—

- 23 Do thou carefully know the faces of thy flock;
and set thy heart upon thy herds;

²³ Be thou diligent
to know the state of
thy flocks, and look
well to thy herds:

We cannot take it too literally. The meaning is, that the "flock" is no more the life of the husbandman, than the face of God the portion of His saints. Our farming is to cultivate that territory. In [His] light shall we see light. We are to see Him, and learn to know Him, and begin to rejoice in Him; and do it while the morn lasts:—

- 24 for riches are not forever :
and does the crown endure throughout all
generations?

²⁴ For riches are not
for ever: and doth the
crown endure to every
generation?

It is true secularly. The farmer, out upon his fields, is a lord of kingdoms. He strikes the subject earth, and all nature is obedient to his bidding. But it is transient. With bowed head, she is obedient only in her season:—

- 25 The hay appeared, and the grass was seen,
and mountain herbage gathered.

²⁵ The hay appear-
eth, and the tender
grass sheweth itself,
and herbs of the mount-
ains are gathered:

—the meaning of all being, that if we would guard "*the fig tree*," we must come in upon it in its season. The pastures for the eye spring forth in this earthly period. "*Riches are not forever.*" The impenitent wears a "*crown*" (v. 24), a badge that he may claim heaven if he will; and lo, his chance! But "*the crown*" is not "*forever.*" Like the progression of the seasons, the "*face*" of Christ reveals itself as the object of faith; and lo! like "*the grass*" upon the hills, it "*was*" and is not.

Still Solomon gives the picture. There "*was*" nourishment, though we famished:—

- 26 There were lambs for thy clothing,
and he goats as a rent for the field;

²⁶ The lambs are for
thy clothing, and the
goats are the price of
the field.

27 and abundance of goat's milk for thy food,
for the food of thy house,
and for the life of thy maidens.
27 And thou shalt
have goats' milk
enough for thy food,
for the food of thy
household, and for the
maintenance for thy
maidens.

The nurture of the saints is enough for them, and for their households: but it comes, like the stores of "the field," perishably, and must be secured in its season. "Lambs." Notice how princely the clothing is to be. "Rent;" literally "price." There is affluence in the picture. The "he goats," a small part of the product, will pay the "rent;" and over that, "abundance;" "abundance" for ourselves; "abundance" for our households; no straitness in Christ; the straitness all in ourselves (Mic. 2:7; 2 Cor. 6:12); the folly being when the pastures are left to wither, and when, in some mad thought to snatch wealth at the last, we have never known the faces of the flock (v. 23).

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The pastures of the "eyes" (27:20) being so rich, and being the "face" (2 Cor. 6:12) of the Redeemer, it is fit that the Wise Man should speak of that other pasture, which we have in the "faces" of "the wicked." He declares that the wise man will shun "the wicked" even for this unconscious example, without and before any hostile demonstration:—

- I As to the wicked man, even when he is not pursuing, the righteous have taken flight,
THE wicked flee
when no man pursu-
eth: but the righteous
are bold as a lion.
 but as to the righteous a man may be as confident as a lion.

Difficulties crowd in this passage. We have not made it simple. We have chosen the least out of many awkwardnesses. By the received translation, which is that of the English Version, we have anomalies which we think inspiration does not admit. The verb in the first clause is a plural, and would have a singular noun. The verb in the second clause is a singular, and would have a plural noun. Anomalies like this

must have a reason, particularly in a clean-cut Proverb; and here, most conveniently for the discussion, the reasons would stultify each other. “*The righteous*” (E. V.), and “*the wicked*” (E. V.), are both in like degree collective. If a singular attracts a plural in the first clause, most certainly a plural should keep a plural where it is, in the second. We cannot believe these forms are unintended; and the best unravelment we can reach, is to find a sense which will make all the members agree. This we have attempted. By the other way we get a thought unsuited to the context; by this all fits exactly. Our parsing is, that the verb in the first clause has understood for it the noun of the second. Proverbs dislike repetitions. They have cases, therefore, of this double office in a noun (12:14; 21:2; 27:9). They delight in being curt; and, moreover, in being well balanced. “*The wicked man*,” therefore, as with many of these nouns (Class XIII.), stands absolutely, and is to be read, “**as to the wicked man**.” So is the term “*the righteous*,” in the second clause; while, for nominatives, the plural of the first clause draws to it “*the righteous*” of the second, and the singular of the second, an impersonal subject that may include the wicked. The meaning is very seasonable. God’s character is the pasture-ground of the saints (chap. 27th), and they grow by feeding upon it. Man’s character, as far as it is corrupt, would be their deadly poison. *They fly even when the wicked are not giving chase.* With good men we may have the confiding safety that “**a lion**” feels; with a bad man we are injured when he may not intend it. Two motives, therefore, guide our version; one, that it falls in with the thought; the other, that it takes up the plurals. We cannot imagine that these set shapings of the verb in a constructed saying can be without their purpose. “**Confident;**” a good expression about “**a lion**,” in that lazy trust in which he is easy about an enemy.

Mutual influence being the subject fairly inaugurated, beginning with the “*face*” of our “*Friend*” (27:17), the inspired Solomon goes on to represent its extent in the instance of the righteous. He is not only safe (v. 1), but potent. He not only acts by unconscious example, like the wicked; but he has strange power when he does his duty:—

- 2 In the sin of a land many are its leaders ;
but by the plainest man who imparts dis-
cernment, getting knowledge, it makes
itself endure.

² For the transgres-
sion of a land many are
the princes thereof:
but by a man of under-
standing and know-
ledge the state thereof
shall be prolonged.

The text discriminates. “**Many.**” “One sinner destroyeth much good” (Ec. 9:18); but alas! among a bad people, “*many*” have been at work as “leaders.” “**But by the plainest man;**” **םְנָךְ**, the peasant title for our race. The bearing is intensive. Even “*by the plainest man, who imparts discernment;*” as all do who are pious; “*a land, getting knowledge;*” literally, “*knowing.*” The participle is masculine; and so “*land*” is, sometimes (Gen. 13:6). It is treated as feminine close by (see suffix, first clause); but it grows masculine, naturally, as the people heave in view (Is. 66:8; see Gesen.) “**Makes itself endure;**” literally, “*prolongs*” (Hiphil.) There is great density in the passage. “*In the [wickedness] of a land many are its leaders.*” Large numbers have been at work corrupting it; and that for long periods. But mark how it is recovered! first, as it was corrupted; viz., by men; second, not as it was corrupted, but by but a single “*man,*” when “*many*” misled it; third, by “*the plainest man;*” fourth, by one who must be *discerning*; because, fifth, by one who must *impart discernment*; viz., sixth, to men who must *get it*, or take it up. All these things must accord together. No “*land*” can be blessed without itself taking up “*knowledge;*” and few lands have done this without the work of noted individual believers. “*The plainest man.*” Such was our Lord. The text is grandly Messianic. The labors of all other men were instrumental. His was as King of Heaven. The reading that makes the “*many princes*” (E. V.) an infliction, and that quotes for itself an Arab curse, “*May Allah multiply your sheiks*” (see Aiken, in Lange, *in loc.*), fails in this,—that the term should then be higher. It should be kings, or rulers. “*Princes*” were “*many*” by their very order. That “*getting knowledge,*” which is a participle, should agree with “*man,*” and be apposed to *imparting discernment*, which is another participle, would do very well in grammar, but strips away one of the best features of the sentence,

viz.. that a land must *get knowledge* before it can be blessed. Moreover it abolishes the force of “*thus*;” and, no conjunction being employed, it gives no account of that fact; that is, no reason why, in so natural a place, the usual conjunction should be omitted. “*Thus* ;” an important word. A land, “*getting knowledge*” from a pious leader, “*thus makes itself endure*.”

But now the twin picture :—(1) A single man; (2) not common, but great; (3) not pious, but “*poor*” (in the spiritual sense); (4) not *imparting discernment*, but, in every sense, just the opposite; is brought in under the figure of a storm :—

- 3 A strong man, who is poor, and oppresses
the weak,
is a shower that comes sweeping, so that
there is no food.
- 3 A poor man that
oppresseth the poor is
like a sweeping rain
which leaveth no food.

This is notorious secularly. Heavy task-setters are the “*poor*” over the “*poor*.” Slaves make the tightest masters. A rich tyrant is a big-meshed seine: small fish may pass unnoticed. But “*a poor strong man* ;” “*strong*” to gripe, and “*poor*” to have demands, is like a “*sweeping shower*.” It brings “*no food* ;” and it *sweeps*; literally, it *scrapes*; all that *was* growing; by its drastic torrents, out of the soil. Such was the earthly picture. But Solomon brings it into the midst of his spiritual word-painting. “*A strong man who is poor*” (v. 2); like Paul; that is, as Paul was, before he came to his inheritance. “*Strong* ;” *רָבֶב*, the *mighty man*; not the *common man*; *a great man who is poor, and who lights down among a poor people*; that means, an able man who is without Christ, and who can influence men who are also utterly impenitent; “*is a shower that comes sweeping* ;” significantly, “*a shower* ;” a thing which in its richness and its needfulness might seem to promise good; but which, like the rule of some great sinner, by its very elements of strength *sweeps* every abiding blessing. The texts are matched, therefore (vs. 2, 3). A common man, pious, may make a whole land pious, and may make it long endure. A man, not a common man, but able and great, but a man not pious, and moving upon a people not pious, may prosper them to the very

height; and yet, in that very prosperity, like some of the showers of heaven, he may sweep them with utter desolation.

Now, how does he do it? Solomon points out one of the most unconscious influences:—

- 4 **Forsaking direction, men praise the wicked;** ⁴ They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them.
but, observing direction, they make war upon them.

"Forsaking direction." This is a fine lesson. It is all intense. "*Forsaking direction* ;" certainly one of the lightest terms for sinning. A man may intend to repent. He may "*praise*" it; that is, he may applaud the system of the gospel; and may be one that is pronounced a most useful church-man. Solomon would say,—Yes; but does he obey "*direction*"? We are so circumstanced that, if we do not, all else misleads. You notice the careful language. "*Forsaking direction* ,"*simply evading or avoiding it, no matter on what pretence*. Solomon strikes for the result. He scoffs at all apology. Do you, or do you not, obey "*direction*"? If you do not; the fact that you do not is all that is needed to mislead the looker-on. For, seizing upon that most villainous of all things, **praising the wicked**; a thing that scarce ruffians do; a thing which even obscene seducers scarcely venture; he says,—All disobedience does it. "*Forsaking direction, men praise the wicked; but, observing direction, they make war upon them.*" The lonely widow, going quietly to heaven, who has asked carefully the road, and has moved on as she was *directed*, the text suddenly arms with sword and spear! She is a warrior! In her quiet walk she is smiting down the rivals of her King. And Solomon literally means it. The most effective army of the saints is the quiet group that dream of nothing but obedience. And Solomon means practically; that they fight and conquer; that they conquer, and win territory for Christ; that this is the explanation of the earlier verses (1-3); that the good man makes others good by being good himself; and that, "*forsaking direction*," unbelief **praises the wicked**, and **praises them** in that most insidious of ways, which beguiles the more for being anything but an open eulogy. "*Direction* :" a word usually translated "*law*"

(E. V.); see 31 : 26. “*Praise* ;” the word significantly employed, chap. 27 : 21. “*Make war upon* ;” a peculiar Hithpael, with a preposition; literally, “*irritate themselves against*.” The dying Christian, too weak except to breathe forth joy, is a warrior in the very thick against the cohorts of “*the wicked*.”

Not understanding any such crime, however, the unbeliever, of course, cannot understand his guiltiness. The next Proverb, therefore, lays hold of that appropriate idea:—

- 5 Evil men put no meaning upon judgment : 5 Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the Lord understand all things.
but they that seek Jehovah put a meaning upon everything.

In Heaven there will really be more puzzles than we have on earth. Hell will be really darker; for it will show more mysteries. And yet, that part of our nature that has been dark here being flooded with light, it will be better prepared for those heavier difficulties. “**Evil men put no meaning upon judgment.**” Why? Because they do not see enough of what is bright, to “*put a meaning upon*” what is palpably obscure. “**They that seek Jehovah put a meaning upon everything.**” Why? Because they have light enough of other sorts to convince them even as to that which abides in darkness. It is like the flushed child going out in rugged health into the storm. He enjoys it. This is the secret of Heaven’s bliss. There will be no narcotic, deadening the sense; no idiocy; no Lethe sponging away the past; but when, with clear eye, we look straight into Hell, there will be such light from Heaven, like the warmth of the child which he carries out into the cold, that we will have flushed health to help us to trust the Almighty. Heaven may have other mysteries; the Throne, as well as the Pit; and it may be no lighter over one than over the other; but there will be this difference:—a body of other light will satisfy the saint, and a horror of other darkness will incapacitate the sinner. “*Put a meaning upon.*” We retain thus much causative for the Hiphil (see 1 : 2).

Piety, on these accounts, being such a power over the lost (v. 2) and such a comfort to the saved man himself (27 : 25-27), must be, as Christ pronounced it, the “one thing needful:”—

- 6 Better off is a poor man, walking in his integrity,
than he that is led into double ways, and, as such, is rich.
- 6 Better is the poor that walketh in his up-rightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.

Not “*better*” (E. V.), but “**better off**.” The word is simply “*good*;” but it has a wide significance. “*Good*,” in the sense of *goodness*, would make a truism; because, what would that be but “**walking in integrity?**” The meaning is, that piety, with such glorious power (v. 2), and also with such inward light (v. 5), is a mine; and “*better off*” is the saint in poverty than the clouded sinner, even under a shower of wealth. “**Led, etc.**”; literally “*crooking*,” or “*making crooked two ways*;” virtually, *attempting two ends of living*; a very common attitude of the impenitent mind. “*Integrity*;” *wholeness*; the very opposite of this *double walking*. “**As such**;” the emphatic pronoun; not really “*rich*,” but “*rich*” as a crooked walker counts it, in a wretched and unsatisfying sense. “**Double ways**;” dual. See the other case of it in verse 18th. Why have not these duals been noticed? “*Integrity*,” or *wholeness*, is what affords the contrast in both the sentences.

Piety has so strong an influence, that it will enable the inferior to influence the superior; the man of lower state, to impress favorably the higher and more refined. This could not happen often in politics, or literary life; but it does in piety:—

- 7 He that observes direction is a son that gives instruction:
but he that keeps company with the base does even his father harm.
- 7 Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father.

“*Direction*;” the word usually “*law*” (E. V.). See 3:1. “*Observes*;” literally “*mounts guard over*.” “**Gives instruction**;” Hiphil participle of the verb to *discern*: literally, “*causing to discern*.” The idea is, *teaching*. Uniformly, in spite of the Hiphil, the disposition has been to translate, *being wise* (E. V.). We never could understand this. Other parts of the verb imply the more passive wisdom. Why were they not employed? Moreover, we have looked over the cases, and they nearly all need the causative: some of them most peremp-

torily (Ps. 119:27); and none more peremptorily, perhaps, than the Proverb now before us. “*He that observes direction is a son that gives instruction.*” This Proverb means, that a child, walking in the faith, becomes a spiritual teacher; that he *instructs* even the grey-headed; that he does it unconsciously; while the companion of “**the base**,” in the same unconscious way, can influence even his superiors; that is, “**does even his father harm.**” *Harms*, or “*does harm;*” often, properly, *brings to shame* (E. V.). The original, however, means to *wound*; often to *hurt*, to *harm* (see 1 Sam. 25:7; Ruth 2:15). This chapter is full of the idea of *influence*. We hesitate not to put on this text the sense of an *imparted lesson*.

But now, mark the triumph! Where this law might be thought to be universal, the Wise Man suddenly arrests it. There can be no mischief to the righteous (12:21). A man may be a perfect devil. He may snatch the poor man’s wealth, and stain the good man’s character. He may be thought to ruin him. But, in the end, he cannot rob him in the least; and the spoils that he has seized shall be laid up for the good man’s benefit:—

- 8 He that increases his competence by exactation and usury
is gathering it for some one who will favor the weak.

8 He that by usury
and unjust gain increaseth his substance,
he shall gather it for
him that will pity the poor.

“**Competence;**” from a verb meaning to be *light, ease of circumstances*. Not that a rapacious villain shall disgorge his treasure, and pass it to the righteous: this may never happen: but something much more profound than this. A man, not rapacious in the opinion of mankind, “is a thief and a robber” in the eye of our text. All the impenitent, be they false or honest, are grasping after that which is “*another man’s.*” The Proverb includes the whole of them. All impenitent toils which are building up prosperity on the earth shall inure to the righteous. Built ever so high, the castles of the impenitent man are for Christ. The sinner “*does harm;*” the righteous do good; this was the general doctrine (v. 7; Ec. 9:18). But Solomon now alters its shape. There is no final “*harm.*”

There is no “*harm*” at all to God’s chosen people. There are terrible perversities of lot; but the towers of His foes are in trust for the Redeemer. Be their throne ever so high, it is for His saints; and it is an investment of wealth the very safest for His believing people.

One may be in himself an “*abomination*;” and he may “*lead the righteous astray in an evil path*” (v. 10); thus answering to as dark a picture as could easily be traced. He may be loathsome to God, and may make “*the righteous*” loathsome for following his example; for, beyond a doubt, the wicked may mislead the righteous; and the Wise Man would exhaust all the principles of influence: but there can be no misleading in the end. A sinner cannot hurt a saint. Alas! a saint has often hurt a sinner. But there can be no injury to the righteous (12:21). Nay; a stronger doctrine!—Tempting him will only bless him. The very Devil is a means of grace. Such is the teaching of the tenth verse. One that is an utter “*abomination*” (v. 9) may be an actual profit (v. 10); or how could Paul dream that “*all things*,” could be worked for good (Rom. 8:28)? The most infamous wretch that ever misled the elect, may dig for them “*a pit*,” and may utterly seduce them into wickedness; but their “*own wickedness shall correct*” them (Jer. 2:19). He “*shall himself fall into his own pit while the upright get good.*” So, then for the two Proverbs together:—

9 He that averts his ear from hearing direction,
even his prayer shall be abomination.

9 He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.

10 Whoso leads the righteous astray in an evil path
shall himself fall into his own pit,
while the upright get good.

10 Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall have good things in possession.

But, more individually. “*He that averts his ear from hearing direction;*” the old story of *rebelliousness* (1:32), or *disobedience* (Heb. 2:2). The impenitent may talk of *purpose*; but there are plain *directions* which he is not obeying. The Book delights in these simpler phases of our guiltiness. You may be a *very moral man*; but how about God’s *directions*? There are

simple *directions*, which you are told to take; and they have been made clear since you were a child. You know them, and never obey them! You say, you pray. How reasonable to ask,—“Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Lu. 6:46.) The Scripture glows with this astonishment. It looms out everywhere. Instead of a wonder that we are not heard, the wonder seems that we ask to be: for think of the perpetual ingratitude: asking and never obeying: and this expounds our text:—“*He that averts his ear from hearing direction, even his prayer shall be abomination.*” Now this “abomination” is to have a use. This is the second wonder. After seducing the righteous; after misleading everybody; these unconscious influences, after being deadly, like the spores of the plague, teleologically are to serve a purpose, as really as the fact of the atonement. They may mislead, but cannot hurt; they may mislead a moment, but not finally. They may mislead the elect, but, *ad terminum*, the sinner; and then (whole stories higher in the thought), they are not only not terminal in harm to the elect, but they actually bless him. The sinner falls “*into his own pit, while the upright get good.*” “*Get good:*” not as a general fact, but as a specific consequence; not that the “*upright*” should turn out well in the end, but should be better for being seduced; that they are to gain by their snares and to “*get good*” by being *misled by the wicked*.

The world not taking that view, Solomon explains how the church does take it; and how the world misconceives, and how the church understands, their mutual situation:—

11 He that is wise in his own eyes, is a rich man;
but a poor man, who can discriminate, searches him out.
The rich man is wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.

“Who can discriminate;” literally, “*causing to discern;*” or *putting a meaning on the thing* (1:2, 6). It is the Hiphil. We love to preserve a *soufflon* of the causative. The meaning is, a lost man “*is rich*” only in fancy. If he feels he is not lost, he “*is rich*,” but only for the time. The man who is saved, has a vast advantage over him. He may be a perfect pauper;

yet, if he be a saint, he and he only is “*rich*,” and he and he only understands the poverty of the other man. “**Wise in his own eyes.**” *Wisdom* means piety. “*Wise in [one's] own eyes*” means pious in one's own belief. When it is the attribute of the impenitent, there results a hypocrite. The hypocrite is “*rich*.” He has crowns and heaven, and enjoys all the ease of a Christian. But he is “*rich*” just as he is pious, viz., “*in his own eyes.*” And a man ever so poor, who is really pious, pities him, and would dread his riches.

To make *mutual influence* the very best (for that subject is still uppermost), it might seem well precisely to reverse the last picture; to make the poor man (when the poverty is in the “spirit,” Matt. 5 : 3) feel rich; and the rich man, when it is all fancied wealth, feel his poverty. The next Proverb admits that there is “**beauty**,” at least, in such well-founded conditions of the mind:—

- 12 In the exulting of the righteous there is great beauty: but, when the wicked rise, a man must dig deep to understand it.
- 12 When righteous men do rejoice, there is great glory: but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden.

“**In the exulting;**” the preposition with the infinitive. “**When the wicked rise;**” exactly the same formation. “*Rise;*” i. e., prosper. “**Great beauty;**” it seems so fit in every way. “**Must dig to understand it.**” This is but one word; a Puhal formation. The root means, to “*dig*.” The Pihel means, to “*dig*,” or *search out*. The Puhal would then mean, to be *made to “dig,”* or *search out*. The Proverb means;—for a Christian to *exult* is fit, and, therefore, *beautiful*: for a sinner to prosper, or stand high, is a mystery: it puzzles the spirit; and sets us to digging, or searching out. The idea is repeated in the 28th verse. There, the first words are the same, but the verb is different. It is the common verb for *veiled*, or *covered over*. Its force is obvious. In the present verse, the elevation of the wicked is said to put us to the *search*, or to force us to *puzzle the mystery out*. In the 28th, it is said to *cover us over*; i. e., to *bury us in cloud and mystery*.

So much for what is *beautiful!* But the Wise Man remem-

bers that Christians have more to do than to exult, or to be happy. They have a great crowd of “*sins*” to bring to light. “Rejoice evermore,” says the Apostle. And yet,—“Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” The two are not inimical. It is “*a great beauty*” (v. 12) to rejoice. It honors God; yea, it is a high form of faith. It gives vast strength (Neh. 8 : 10), this exercise of spiritual joy. But, alas for us! burdened with our sins, there comes something that must modify all that. It is a weakness; it springs from wickedness; it is itself a wickedness, as compared with joy; but it is a step of the lost soul on the way to happiness. Historically he “*sins*.” Intermediately he must repent. The passage out of those “*sins*” is one of pain and suffering. And though health is better than disease, the throes of sickness may be the very fight that health makes. The pang of pain may be the travail by which there is to be birth for comfort. However that may be, Solomon says that “*exulting is [a] great beauty*;” but he crowds upon it at once, with a far heavier undertaking:—

13 He that covers his sins shall not prosper; | ₁₃ He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but he that confesses and forsakes shall | ₁₃ He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

For, if a man can *exult*, and feel all his sinfulness beside, then he ought to *exult* indeed; for he is a high style of a believer. But if he cannot, let him remember that “*exulting*” may be the far easier work; and has been done, as this very book declares (25 : 14), by hosts of the finally impenitent.

Yet, cannot this birth in travail begin, and be prosperously finished? Shall we not have grown-up believers? May not such men *exult*? The very promise of our Lord was, “Blessed are they that mourn, *for they shall be comforted*.” We are not speaking of mourning convicts. Shall we not ripen into an immunity from pain? The Proverb seems to say,—No, never:—

14 Blessed is the man who fears continually; | ₁₄ Happy is the man that feareth always: but but he that hardens his heart, shall fall as he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into being an evil. | ₁₄ Happy is the man that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.

"As an evil." This is the **ג** before alluded to (3 : 26). Unconscious influence makes us deadly. Quiet things, that win from us no thought, are destroying others. "**Blessed is the man who fears continually;**" that is, who has all *fear* in his mind that "perfect love" has not yet cast out (1 Jo. 4 : 18). "Perfect love" comes only in Heaven. Some *fear* must follow us while we continue on the earth. "**Blessed is the man who fears continually.**" While "**he that hardens his heart;**" getting rid of *fear* by hardness, and not by *faith*; not being able to smother this, but making example of the deadly facts, shall spread mischief by his case, and "**shall fall,**" at last, "*as being an evil*" in the creation.

But now another truth:—A man may have the most deadly power. He may be a prince. He may have the most fatal opportunities to ruin. He may have great personal charms; and may be exerting them over all his "**people.**" And yet, when the edge of his power comes to bear upon the saints, Solomon announces the triumph that it will "**prolong [their] days:**"—

15 A roaring lion and a ranging bear
is a wicked ruler over a weak people.

15 As a roaring lion,
and a ranging bear; so
is a wicked ruler over
the poor people.

16 A prince, wanting discernment, and of
great exactions,
shall prolong the days of them that hate
robbery.

16 The prince that
wanteth understanding
is also a great oppressor;
but he that hateth
covetousness shall pro-
long his days.

The fifteenth verse is a more commonplace preliminary. We have seen this in other instances (24 : 1-6, 21). Secularly, the verse makes a tyrant, when he has got himself in power, a perfect desolation; "**a roaring lion and a ranging bear.**" But, spiritually, the "**weak people**" are impenitents. The "**wicked ruler**" is a man of no religion, but great power to influence. The text is a fresh setting forth of the fact of the amazing deadliness of one such powerful sinner. But it is preliminary to the 16th verse. Let such a man do his worst. Let him want piety, and be a desperate plunderer of the soul; yet, let his victim be a saint; or one, in the language of the type, "**of them that hate robbery;**" and what is deadly to the "**weak**" shall build up **and exalt his blessedness.**

"Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt;
 "Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled.
 "Yea, even that which mischief meant most harm,
 "Shall, in the happy trial, prove most glory."—MILTON's *Comus*.

"**Soul**"-murder, when it does succeed, is a desperate iniquity :—

17 A man weighed down with the blood of a soul; let him flee to the pit; let none stay him. ¹⁷ A man that doeth violence to the blood of *any* person shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him.

If a man is certain to be lost, the sooner he perishes the better. This seems to be a plain dictate of Scripture (Job 36:13; Rom. 2:5; 2 Tim. 3:13; Heb. 2:2). A man is certain to be lost, who sins away his day of grace. The Wise Man means to imply that "**soul**"-murder is akin to such transgression. We cannot imagine that a man who influences a soul amiss, so that that soul is lost, will himself beyond doubt perish. Alas! none of us would be saved. For this chapter is principally engaged in showing how light the sins seem that ruin (vs. 16, 20-22, 24). But it takes care to end these thoughts on example by a great menace. Soul-murder is horrible iniquity. Think what it produces! The bolder forms of it must be horribly fatal. He that is "**weighed down**"; i. e., who has the heavier forms of this terrible offence, is as good as sentenced. Life only adds to his liability. As our Saviour echoes the Proverb,—"It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the depths of the sea." "**Let**"; an imperative in either case. I need hardly say how this does not teach suicide; nor, that it is right to clear the way for a reprobate sinner, and help him to his account; but, like many an imperative, it has the force of a prediction. "What thou doest do quickly" (Jo. 13:27) meant not, imperatively,—Go, do the thing; but, infinitely far from it. It meant predictively, that it would be done; and doctrinally, that it had better be, for the speedier end, and lighter liability, of the Traitor Judas.

There was a space with the old copyists, before the last verse. It is odd that it did not occur after it. More than any division lately it would have seemed to separate handsomely; viz., the

facts as to *mutual impression*, and that list of after Proverbs in which that subject scarcely appears.

It would be interesting to make a '*Harmony of Solomon and the New Testament*,' and see how far this wise King anticipated the truth that was afterwards to be revealed. We would yoke the next verse with Christ, as He was to be reported in the Evangelist. The subject has been, *Mutual Influence*. We have seen how character impressed others (vs. 1, 2) with a quite unconscious impression. Character has been the grand thing; and we are to get back now upon that most eminent arena. The speech of our Saviour will be thought of, Matthew 6:22,—“If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light:” or James (1:8);—“The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways:” for now Solomon:—

18 He that walks as a whole man shall be saved;
but he that is turned two ways shall fall in one.
^{x8} Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once.

“**Walks**,” the old speech for *conducts* or *behaves*; according, of course, with “**ways**” in the second clause. “**As a whole man**,” a masculine singular adjective for *complete* or *entire*; usually translated *perfect* (E. V.); in this case “*uprightly*” (E. V.). But the root meaning “*whole*,” the thought lies there. And often it unriddles a speech to go back to the original idea (see Class XXIX). “*He that walks as a whole man shall be saved.*” This is a sort of common-place (see remarks 24:1–6), beginning a discussion on personal culture. “**Turned two ways.**” The dual substantive we came near missing. It occurs but twice in the Bible; both instances in this chapter (see v. 6). “*Turned;*” a verb that means to *crook*, to *twist*. “**In one.**” Gesenius translates “*at once*” (E. V.). So do nearly all. So might we, if we had not noticed that dual. The case Gesenius refers to (Num. 10:4), even our Versionists translate as we do. The meaning is,—The worshiper of God and Mammon (Matt. 6:24); in whichever occupation of the “*two*” he may be overtaken at the time; “*shall fall;*” and it matters not in which of them.

Solomon gets back to life among the farmers (see last chap. vs. 23-27). "*A whole man*" (v. 18) must work as they do. Religion is a steady tilth:—

- 19** He that works his land shall be filled with food; but he that follows after the worthless shall be filled with poverty. | **19** He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough.

For farmers this may be a useful maxim; and, as we repeat again, we do not disturb its secular significance. One thing, however: It is not *true* unvaryingly. And more; quote any world's-proverb! In all the round of maxims, I know not one both secular and sure. It is not *true* that the industrious farmer "**shall be filled with food.**" You may say,—The tendencies are that. And see now how thinkings are positively reversed. Men have a thought as if the forthright drift were secular, that being the square sense, just as it seems to stand. If Solomon would picture piety, he must make it hazy, and content with the shadow of the truth. Whereas, the opposite is the sober fact. World's proverbs have the shadow of the truth: I mean, secularly; I mean, pressed to an extreme. It is not true that "honesty is the best policy." It is not true that "the hand of the diligent maketh rich" (10:4). It is not true that jealousy will take no ransom (6:35); or that "the rich hath many friends" (14:20). All these admit of an exception. Spiritually, no Proverb admits of any exception. And while the one before us is a good picture for a farm; the worky making plenty of bread, and the loafer wasting it with his vain companions; yet, to state absolute truth, it must step into the region of the spirit. He that tills his soul, gets recompense for every stroke. "**He that follows after the worthless,**" gets recompense for nothing. He loses all his wage, and "**shall be [perfectly] filled with poverty.**" "**Filled:**" totally poor, just as he is totally depraved: nay, cursed by his life's thirst. "**No evil shall happen to the righteous;** but the wicked shall be filled with mischief" (12:21).

And yet Wisdom,—sage Watcher!—is already lifting her hand, and giving her warning on the other side. We are not to work anxiously. We are not to get into a fever. We are not

to be "over-righteous" (7:16); or seize too selfishly the "**wealth**" that is from on high:—

- 20** A trustful man shall be rich with blessings; but he that is in a hurry to make wealth shall not go unpunished. **20** A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.

Sparks that are very bright, leap out from all this fire: but the main light and warmth comes centrally from its very bosom. Solomon has dealt with the idea before. The impenitent are prone to "push forward" (20:3); to pour themselves out (18:1); to grasp with unthinking greed (15:27; 20:21; 21:26); to be "**in a hurry**" with their tongue (18:13); and with their feet (19:2). The true saint is not to seize concupiscently even the honey of the gospel (25:16). This is thoroughly consistent with our working eagerly (v. 19). The rugged and persistent task, even in business life, tempers our precipitance. "**Trustful.**" The adjective is made by a noun. The whole expression is "*the man of trusts.*" The same light that helps a man to *trust* in Christ, keeps him from too early a thought of being possessed of religion.

Now light must be upon "*the face*" of the Most High. We are not to anticipate it. We are not to see Him sooner than we really see Him. We are not to "**show partiality**," i. e., to make professions about God, because we think we ought to. We are not to be moved by fear, nor to turn hypocrite before the Prince because He is easily "**offended.**" The Proverb has, as usual, every wide signification; but its *nexus*, in its place, seems to be these precipitancies (v. 20). When carefully compared, the passage obviously agrees with a previous cluster of teachings (24:23-26):—

- 21** To show partiality is not good; though about a morsel of food a strong man may be offended away. **21** To have respect of persons is not good: for, for a piece of bread that man will transgress.

"**Offended;**" literally, may *break with* any one. There are many motives for partiality; sometimes, that we may effect a fraud; sometimes, that we may attract a gift; sometimes, that we may

avert a punishment. It is this last in the present case. We are not to be partial to an earthly prince, even though he is so rabid, as to *break with us about a crumb of bread*. And so about Heaven's King. Fear of Him! Alas! How it has led men astray! Millions in the church have a penitence which is nothing more than the tutoring of terror. They are partial in that they bow to God more than they like. They fear him more than they love Him. They pay down to Him more than they are conscious of as a filial debt. They are partial. They are worshiping, not God, but an image of Him; and that image is "an austere man" (Luke 19:21). It is begot by terror. And, as such a tyrant "**about a morsel of food may be offended away**," they are *partial* to His faults; clutch eagerly after His promises (v. 20); and damn their souls by a false and dishonoring "*partiality*" of confidence.

Fear, therefore, of an anxious and "**trembling**" form may be the very sign of an impenitent:—

- 22** He that is nervously trembling about a competency is a man of an evil eye, and knows it not, because want is coming upon him. **22** He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.

"**He that is nervously trembling.**" This is the Niphal particle of a verb meaning to *tremble*. What a life-picture of most of the opulent! The inspired Solomon borrows it. What a life-picture of the mass of hypocrites! "**Competency.**" It is a very tell-tale term. The root means to *be light*, hence *easy*. And these men, if we inquire enough to find out, are not bent upon high states, but are nervously anxious about "*a competence*" under the gospel. They take no rugged hold, *working their land that they may have plenty of bread* (v. 19); but they are men *showing partiality to the Prince* (v. 21)—courtiers through fear of Him—approaching, like the silvered potsherds, with "*burning lips*" (26:23); being, therefore, selfish men, i. e., "**[men] of an evil eye;**" being, nevertheless, very often quite assured men, because, as the second clause explains, they do not know their impenitency, "**[for the very reason that] want is coming upon [them].**" יְהֹוָה. This is a particle that rarely means

"that" (E. V.); though see Gesenius for the opposite evidence. Unless it means "*that'* here, the secular fades out. How senseless to say, that a man "**knows not**" that he has "*an evil eye*," "**because**" he is getting poor. Still, a whisper of the sense may be found even secularly. A *miser*, that is, a *miserable*, is poor even in the very lap of wealth; "*and knows it not*," even for the very poverty of his *miser* life, that is growing upon him. But the grand sense is religious. The man selfishly griping after heaven, has not "*a bountiful eye*" (22:9); and *he does not know the fact, for the very reason that want is growing upon him*.

Hence the value of shaking to pieces the securities even of the most timid:—

- 23 He that reproves a man, afterwards will | 23 He that rebuketh
find favor, | a man, afterwards shall
more than he that flatters with his tongue. | find more favour than
the tongue.

Men in the pangs of conviction (and it will be repeated again, 29:5, 21), are too much flattered both by minister and people. Much is made of men's anxiety; though the last Proverb connects that with absolute evil. Lists are made of those we call "*anxious*"; and it is considered scarce Christian not to encourage them, and questionably courteous ever to speak harshly of their case. Why is it not natural that they should *stay* "*anxious*," as the approved condition? For we satisfy them too early. Eternity will breed thought of this; for hundreds at this stage are stopped in their conviction, and are cheated by a place outside of Paradise.

Hence, lax views of conduct. Sins of a certain sort none seem to consider. Stinginess! If crowds of Christians are stopped just short of penitence, the thoughts of such people must lend their color in the Sanctuary. Lax principles must prevail. And we see traces of it. The whole head must become sick (Is. 1:5). For look now in the direction of the Almighty. To cheat our neighbor seems wicked; but to cheat God: who often thinks of that? To make a promise to a man, seems a serious business; but to God, altogether of a different complexion. Hence our sacraments. Who thinks his sacrament solemn, like the sale of a farm? We promise everything. And yet, kneeling in prayer,

when we confess we have paid nothing, who winces as he would under a default? Now, we do not say that this may not be applied to a Christian; but in a certain form it may not; and in that form it is so often applicable in the church, that it relaxes every one of us. Solomon throws the picture into a text; and, taking the feeling of a child that stealing is not stealing when he steals from a "father," or a "mother," he fits it into his list, and employs it for our higher relations:—

- 24 He that robs his father and his mother,²⁴ Whoso robbeth
and says,—It is no transgression, his father or his moth-
er, and saith, It is
is a companion, in this very act, of the man no transgression; the
who is a destroyer. same is the companion
of a destroyer.

"Companion, etc.;" he means so, literally: that these sins are fierce, and will appear so at the day of judgment. "A destroyer;" a man of positive, odious, and destructive wickedness. "In this very act;" nothing more than we have translated elsewhere "as such" (19:21); literally, *himself*; simply the expressed pronoun. The doctrine is, that sins in the higher relations, by a strange perversity, are less considered than sins in the lower.

Among these unconsidered sins is *selfishness*, whether in business or religion—"an evil eye" (v. 22), the opposite of "a bountiful (or good) eye" (22:9). Where, ever, did they unchurch a man for stinginess? A rougher viciousness offends the hypocrite, because it gives trouble. Adultery and all phases of dishonor the false Christian will denounce, because they affect his selfishness. But the piety that Solomon pronounces false is "*appetite*"; and, with great correctness, he brings now into his text *great "appetite"* as an actual offence against the Most High:—

- 25 A large appetite stirs up quarrel;
but he that trusts in Jehovah is made fat.²⁵ He that is of a
proud heart stirreth up
strife; but he that putteth his trust in the
LORD shall be made fat.

It will not do to trust to "*a large appetite*" if we would gather *fatness*. The expression is a peculiar one;—"Large appetite;" literally, "*a wide soul*;" (E. V.) "*He that is of a proud*

heart." "Soul," however, means "*appetite*" (23:2); and sometimes "*throat*." "*A wide throat stirs up quarrel*" It is a capital Proverb. Nature revolts from "*a wide throat*;" for, "if the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves on the earth" (Ec. 11:3). When a creature craves, he grows thin like the hungry Cassius. Two sentences further off the like is stated more positively (v. 27). The hypocrite's faith being nothing in the world but selfishness, is not rebuked as *faith*, but as "*a wide appetite*." "*A large appetite stirs up quarrel, but he that trusts in Jehovah is made fat*." "*Stirs up quarrel*;" the discord often noticed (6:19). "*Trusts*;" under a very sense of selfishness and ill-desert. "*Made fat*;" genuinely blessed, even when less eagerly snatching it. A man whose piety consists in nothing but his hunger, may know that he is a hypocrite; for a true *trust fattens* a man at least this much,—that he forgets himself enough to smile, sometimes, at least, upon the interests and safety of other sinners!

Poising, however, next, like a skilled posture-master, Solomon discriminates again. A man's works must save him (Jas. 2:14, 24). A man's heart must save him (4:23; Phil. 2:12). A man's faith must save him; when it works by love and purifies the soul (Gal. 5:6). The heart, therefore, must do everything; I mean, as an instrument. Solomon remembers, next, in what sense it can do nothing:—

- 26 He that trusts in his own heart, as so doing | 26 He that trusteth
is a fool; | in his own heart is a
though he that walks in wisdom, as so doing | fool: but whoso walk-
is delivered. | eth wisely, he shall be
delivered.

"**As so doing;**" see v. 24th. It is the expressed, and, therefore, emphatic, pronoun. It occurs in each clause. **Trusting in one's own heart** is the very essence of being a fool. **Walking in wisdom** is the very essence of being delivered. How do we reconcile the two? In this,—that *walking in wisdom* is the same thing as *trusting in the Redeemer* (v. 25). The "*heart*" has indeed instrumentally to save us. We must *trust* everything to that. But it is the "*heart*" dwelt in by Christ. "*He that trusts in his own heart is a fool*." But he that takes that "*heart*"

and confides it to the Son of Man, receives for it an altered life, and will be able to trust that "heart," thus trusted to Christ, as the instrument in the battle of **deliverance**.

Religion, thus living by faith, and ceasing its "*large appetite*" (v. 25); thus *trusting* and *growing fat* (v. 25, second clause); Solomon represents as gaining the ends of "*appetite*" by the very opposite impulse of lavishing or spending away:—

- 27** Giving to the poor, there shall be no want ; | ²⁷ He that giveth unto
but hiding one's eyes, one shall have many | the poor shall not lack :
a curse. | but he that hideth his
eyes shall have many a
curse.

The echo in New Testament language would read more vigorously:—"Whosoever will save his soul shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his soul for [Christ's] sake shall find it" (Matt. 16: 25). He that forgets himself, has done himself the first real favor; and no man receives the gift, until he ceases to desire it out of the mere coarseness of his "*appetite*."

A prosperous sinner, therefore, with "*a wide appetite*," and still "*fat*," is an anomaly:—"By the wicked rising a man is puzzled." This is the line we have already alluded to (v. 12). "**Puzzled**;" literally, *covered*. A man is *set to searching* was the other expression (v. 12). The prosperous sinner has been the conundrum, from David down (Ps. 73: 16). But there emerges, as the key, the grand triumphal sequence of it, viz., good to the creation. All men are to do good: some men, out of their own saved hearts by the grace of their beneficence; and some, like a fattened ox. All men are to do good:—

- 28** By the wicked rising a man is puzzled; | ²⁸ When the wicked
but, by their perishing, the righteous are | rise, men hide them-
made great. | selves: but when they
perish, the righteous
increase.

The more shame, in one aspect, to "**the righteous**"! If this brief span is the lost man's only comfort, why enviously raise the question about his health and greatness? Why speak of it? It is all a debt and a curse. It is all in wrath, to get him ready for his "**perishing**." And it is all for use: yes, the whole depth of Hell! to **greaten** the saint, and to lift broad worlds into a serener favor.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Woe be to the man, though, who professes to be a saint, and is not. One "*wise in his own eyes*" has been a favorite image of the hypocrite (3:7; 26:12). Here the image is advanced, and a text introduces us to one who attempts to teach others wisdom. By a sort of instinct a man like this might be expected to be very firm in gracelessness:—

- I A MAN given to reproving, who hardens
the neck,
shall suddenly be broken, and that without | He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

The English Version is almost universal. It gives nearly an opposite meaning; certainly as to subject and object. It reads,—“*He that being often reproved*.” Gesenius translates, “*a man of arguments*,” and he means a *self-defensive* man; or, a man that *resists*, if he be plied with the Gospel. The bare terms are,—“*a man of reproofs*;” and the sole question is,—whether the genitive is one of getting or giving; or whether the man shall be one who *gets much reproof*, or one who gives it. By a singular Providence that point is settled immediately, and within the chapter. Where is there ever a chapter like it? Witness the genitives:—verse fourth, *a man of oblations*, or *of free bestowments*; verse eighth, *men of scorn*; verse tenth, “*men of blood*;” verse thirteenth, the *man of oppressions*; verse twenty-second, *a man of anger*; verse twenty-seventh, *a man of wrong*. Shrewd exegetes would ask,—Is there any likeness? or common law of all these particulars? If there is, that is our guide-pole! If there is not, surely there must be some other case, beside the first, of a subjective signification. Now where is it? Not in verse fourth; for *a man of oblations* must be a man who gives them. Not in verse eighth; for *men of scorn* are men who are scorers. Not any where. A *man of blood* (v. 9) is one who sheds it; *a man of oppressions* (v. 13) is one who oppresses; *a man of anger* (v. 22) is one who shows it, not who suffers from it; and so, *a man of wrong* (v. 27) is one

who does wrong, not a man who suffers under the wrongs of others. A simple-hearted commentator would submit to such a collation, and let it decide the text. A "*man of reproofs*." Why should we even incline to say, *a man reproved*, or *a man "reproved often"* (E. V.), when the other sense is deeper, and a man *giving reproof*, accords so perfectly with the other genitives? "**A man given to reproving.**" A sinner setting himself at ease in doctrine, so as to become a teacher, Solomon supposes, is hardly likely to be taught. It is not probable that he will see his want, or imagine himself to be a subject for some other change. He is likely to school himself, in schooling others. Appearing continually among the wise, the lost preacher,—how is he ever to be vanquished? And, therefore, the closing particulars:—First, that his fate must be **sudden**; and, second, that, being *sudden*, the ignorance that makes it so, must seal it, and make it "**without [a] remedy.**" How strong a clerical text! and how good for sermons before Synods and Councils of the Church!

When men are really good, their ability and authority to teach make them great powers in the ungodly world:—

- 2** By the righteous being made great, the people are made glad; but by the wicked man bearing rule, a people are made to mourn.
- 2 When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked bear eth rule, the people mourn.

"**Made glad.**" This word, like the verb to *hate*, becomes pregnant in many texts; i. e., it includes more than the mere passing feeling. *Hating*, indeed, as we have seen (26:28), throws out the feeling sometimes, and may imply what might be its consequences. As, for example, "He that spareth the rod hateth his child." The fact is, he may dearly love him. "**Made glad**," therefore, means blessed, as those may be who are really sorrowful (see Is. 35:1). "**Made to mourn**;" so visited as that they would mourn, if they knew their ruin. Eastern speech is full of such strokes in rhetoric. The Proverb is a signal one. To fill its terms, men must be both "**righteous**" and "**great**." If those two traits be united, how grand the benefits!—from Paul, for example, or from King Josiah! Or, take a whole church.

When the Christians become “*great*” all over a land, how does the whole commonwealth rejoice. The world would be redeemed, were it not that the thrift that a great church begets, glides into excess, and comes back to undermine the gospel.

Not far from this last thought is the one that follows:—

- 3 A man, loving wisdom, shall make his father glad; but a companion of harlots shall destroy a competency.
- 3 Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father; but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance.

Christianity builds up things. It builds up national prosperity. The great ports and States are the regions of the Church. Christianity builds itself up. It builds up an immensity of means. And Bibles, and ministrations of the truth, and actual piety, are the growth of ages. This may not fail in the saint; but in his child! there is the danger. The father may have grace to the end, but alas! his children. If unconverted, what do they do? They spend what the saints heaped up. This brought the curse on Shiloh. When, therefore, a child is converted, it arrests degeneracy; it sheds back joy upon those above him. “**A man, loving wisdom, shall make his father glad; but a companion of harlots;**”—there now comes the great lesson of the Proverb! Every careless child pulls down the edifice which his fathers have been building up. A wise son sheds back the light, and keeps up the ministrations of the faith; “*but a companion of harlots;*” that is, in its inner sense, our impenitent children under the gospel,—pull down our gospel gains, ~~and~~ spend the “**competency**” that was to have sustained them in religion. If all did so, where would be the Church? And when all did do so, as was the case in Asia, how soon did the Church vanish! The gains of centuries were swept by children from the earth.

Solomon is reminded that this is a *divine “judgment.”* The necessity of such things, therefore, is in the idea that follows:—

- 4 A king by judgment gives stability to a land; but a man, free in his bestowals, pulls it down.
- 4 The king by judgment establisheth the land; but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it.

"**Free in his bestowals;**" literally, "*a man of offerings or oblations.*" Our English has it,—"*but he that receiveth gifts.*" This is the same subjective error as the rendering that we opposed (v. 1). "**A man of free bestowals;**" for example "**a king,**" who is acting indulgently in all his administrations. Suppose he turns loose everybody. Men go to jail, and he lets them out. Men sentenced to be hung are certain to get free. Men cumbered with debt are extricated by the nation. So bland a policy, which might seem all light, would speedily manifest itself as all darkness. Solomon wishes to declare this,—the necessity of a strict executive. And because it is obvious on earth, he expects it to be agreed to in the government of the skies. "**A king by judgment gives stability to a land; but a man free in his bestowals** (or God, out of kindred consequence) **pulls it down.**" The doctrine being, that bland, free indulgence, without any strict enforcement of law, would tear everything to pieces, and utterly degrade Heaven and the universe it governs. Here would be a text against Universalists and Pelagian believers.

If there be this fixed law, a man that **flatters** the infringer of it, terribly betrays:—

- 5 A man of influence, speaking flatteringly
about his neighbor,
spreads a net for his feet.

5 A man that flatter-
eth his neighbour
spreadeth a net for his
feet.

"**A man of influence;**" simply one noun substantive. But it is the noun, meaning "*man*" (E. V.), that implies *power*: a *strong man*. The greater the "*man*," the more dangerous will be his *flattery*. The Church, therefore, which is a whole aggregate of men; or her ministers, who are her most potent men, fatally ensnare, when they either deny or palliate damnation. This fault is seen when we hurry men into the church. Life comes to the birth, and we quench it by lack of patience. We take conviction instead of conversion. And finding even *anxiety* rare among the lost, we take that for faith, and fail to co-operate with God, who speaks roughly often like Joseph (Gen. 42:7), and holds men back in their assurance, till they have laid well the foundation of their piety. "**About;**" the

preposition *over*. Some would translate “*against*” (Bertheau). But it is an art in Solomon to make the sentence wide, and to open it abundantly for detail. “*A man*,” not simply “*that flattereth his neighbor*” (E. V.), but literally, “*makes things smooth concerning him*;” for, the Hebrew abundantly includes one who never saw “*his neighbor*,” and never thought of him; or who never intended anything “*against*” him; but who has written a book, or who has propounded a belief, which, *in its free bestowals* (v. 4), has torn all his principles to pieces.

The great “*snares*,” however, is “*sin*.” That silent spectacle, mere *sinning*, *snares* one’s self, and *snares* the “*neighbor*” who only witnesses it. Doctrinally, its acts preach. Practically, it exhorts and influences. It denies the doctrine of eternal death, and says constructively,—‘There is no God at all.’ Solomon is deep in the philosophy of unconscious influence. And yet, as the converse to this, though “*sin*” is a temptation to “*sin*,” the strong point in the next Proverb will be, that “*the righteous*” will be taught by it. It is his discipline (Jer. 2 : 19). He will finally *overcome* it; he will in the end make gain by it; nay, at last, *rejoice over* it; not, indeed,—that he has been shamefully sinful; but that he has been bettered by his defeats, and that they shall have ministered ultimately to his crown and victory:—

- 6 In the sin of an evil man is a snare;
but the righteous overcomes and rejoices.

6 In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare; but the righteous doth sing and rejoice.

“*Overcomes*.” The favorite reading here has been, “*doth sing*” (E. V.); but by the use entirely of another verb. One easier to parse has been thrown aside;—meaning, to *get the upper hand*. We seize upon that as the inspired one, and we vindicate it, first, by its grammatic rights, and second, by its superior sense as it stands in the passage. “*Sin*” flatters and leads us astray in every fashion; and is, therefore, “*a net*”; but the righteous struggles. That very struggle strengthens him. Hence the delight in the end. “*In the sin of an evil man is a snare; but the righteous overcomes and rejoices.*”

Like every other rescued man, who is magnanimous, “*the righteous*” is a rescuer of others:—

7 The righteous man taking knowledge of
the cause of the weak,
the wicked man makes no attempt to know
it.

The righteous considereth the cause of the poor : but the wicked regardeth not to know it.

"Cause ;" the judicial "cause ;" the great life case. "Taking knowledge ;" simply "knowing." It is a participle. When will it be that we shall be so perfect in our faith as to mark all tenses, and all moods, of inspiration, and insist upon a sense for each of them? Here, the first clause must be participially a condition. *The righteous, attending to the weak, the wicked does not attend to them.* One conduct is the apology for the other. Now treat "the weak" as spiritual, and all is most apparent. By "the righteous," as one of the impulses of piety, "the weak," in their lost estate, come naturally to be considered. "The wicked" on that very account stand clear of them. Nay, an ungodly church hears that they are attended to, and slight them. It is a common impulse. If there be a Sunday School, we hear of it, and get rid of our children. It helps our conscience. Delegated work; men like it! and so stands the Proverb. The pious are attending to it well, and, therefore, we "[make] no attempt" that way. "Makes no attempt to know." There is a strange mingling, with the impenitent, of consciousness and unconsciousness. They are certainly conscious of their negligence, and yet unconscious of it; and will carry this latter plea to the Judgment Bar. "Lord, when saw we thee an-hungered?" Solomon charges, however, that they "[make] no attempt to know." Even "the wicked" would scarcely neglect a child, and let him go swift to Hell, if they did not think he was attended to; or that Christ, at least, was in some way "taking knowledge of [his] cause."

"Taking knowledge of the cause of the weak" (v. 7), the righteous in the end will move in it; and Solomon, like Christ, predicts "commotion" (v. 9) as incident to those forms of enterprise. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance, etc." (Matt. 10: 34, 35). Paul, more inwardly, deals in a like description:—"I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind" (Rom. 7: 23). The

duty of the righteous is to attend to "*the cause of the weak*" (v. 7); but, in doing so, he will find eternal conflict (v. 9).

Before introducing that thought, a text prepares for it (see other instances, 24 : 1-6; 28 : 18), by giving it a setting, so to speak, of a more common-place annunciation. The wise man and the fool man have each their way of raising a storm; and we are to glance at the fool (v. 8) before we inspect the variances occasioned by "**the wise**" (v. 9):—

- 8 Scornful men set a city on fire;
but the wise repress passion.

8 Scornful men bring
a city into a snare: but
wise men turn away
wrath.

"**Scornful men**;" literally, "*men of scorn*" (see v. 1). We are not to understand, vulgar scoffers, but impenitent citizens, all of whom practically *scorn* the truth (see 1 : 22). "**Set on fire.**" A verb like this means to *trap* (see E. V.); but a verb to *blow*, and hence to *enflame*, gives us the idea of excitement (Is. 9 : 18); that inflaming of mind, which, whether of God or man, follows our impenitence. "**The wise repress passion.**" That is, they have an influence for peace. Ungodliness, like the leaven of the "*woman*" (Matt. 13 : 33), or, like the Termagant Spouse (27 : 15), sets everything "*on fire*." It is a festering Hell, at peace neither with itself or its Creator.

But now the other Storm-King:—

- 9 A wise man has been in conflict with the
foolish man;
and there has been commotion and de-
rision, but no rest.

9 If a wise man con-
tendeth with a foolish
man, whether he rage
or laugh, there is no
rest.

I dare not leave off the *perfects*. Piety *has already* raised the tempest. It is not a thing of purpose, but a thing of fact. The church is not a Pantheon of all beliefs; but from her birthday has been making trouble, as a restless and jealous Bride. "**Commotion and derision;**" i. e., deep-moved feeling on the part of saints, and scoffing and carelessness on the part of sinners. **Wise men** are ever at it. Their very prayers breed tempest (Rev. 8 : 3-5; 11 : 6). Their very sermons sow difficulties: because "*the flesh lusteth against the Spirit*" (Gal. 5 : 17); and "*the friendship of the world is enmity with God*"

(Jas. 4:4). The past tense makes it stronger; for it is not an intention to contend, but a habit, ever since we were saints, to be struggling in the **conflicts** for our Master.

The lost men return the enmity:—

- 10 Men of blood hate integrity ; | to The blood-thirsty
but the righteous seek after its very self. | hate the upright: but
the just seek his soul.

We are to notice the second clause. The Scripture never says that the wicked "hate integrity" in "its very self," for that would be untrue. Purity of moral life is a thing in "*itself*" reasonable; and we have shown before (1:22) how impossible for a human soul in "*itself*" to "hate" it. We have quoted the passages sufficiently (1:22) that show this. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Why? Because he is odious in Himself? Far from it. The idea of God is perfect to anybody. And so it explains:—Because God interferes with it, and restrains it; "because it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light;" why? "Because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, *lest his deeds should be reproved*" (Jo. 3:19, 20). There is, therefore, this eternal conflict; but with this difference,—that the wicked hate the light, because they fail to love it, and, therefore, will not brook its rancorous reproofs: whereas "*the righteous*" go deeper. They do love the light: and, as the second clause discriminates, they "*seek*" *its very self*; and so, drawn by those higher beauties, resign what the lost "*seek*," and, as Christ expresses it, "come to the light, that their deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God" Jo. 3:21). The sentence, however, needs much consideration. "**Men of blood.**" See 1:16. See also Rom. 3:15. All sinners are "*men of blood*." By their unconscious influences, they get the blood of souls upon their skirts. "*Hate*," for reasons already given. "*Integrity*." There is scarce any instance of this adjective in a substantive form: and yet it is functionally grammatical. It may be that the Psalms give an instance (Ps. 37:37). Other adjectives certainly give them in

great abundance (for instance בָּרוּךְ and יְהוָה). If we abandoned the abstract meaning of “*integrity*,” a kindred sense would even still remain. “*Men of blood hate the upright man, but the righteous seek after him (or are drawn to him) in his very self.*” “*Its very self;*” is, literally, *its*, or *his soul*. *Seeking his soul* is usually in a bad sense. A meaning *in bonam partem* is found in Ps. 142:4, *marg.* But in that case there is a different verb. Still, most commentators approve the English Version, “*but the just seek; i. e., seek the good of, or seek the deliverance of, his, that is, the good man's, soul.*” This is rather a jumble; for the man, when upright, less needs deliverance. The telling significance is as above.

And we go on with that finely to the text which follows. The righteous makes his headway by conflict. He does so with others (v. 9). And he does so with himself (v. 10):—

11 A fool acts forth all his spirit;
but a wise man subdues it back.

|
A fool uttereth all
his mind: but a wise
man keepeth it till
afterwards.

“**Acts forth;**” literally, “*causes to go out.*” “**Spirit;**” all that in a man which God's Spirit sanctifies: of course, before that sanctification, an unsanctified “*spirit.*” The English word is not an equivalent. The meaning is, that our whole impenitent nature is *acted out.* It grows, therefore. A man may think that he restrains it. So he does, to the measure that he is not yet depraved. But further than this, it would be one unsanctified principle restraining another. To the measure that he is depraved, “**A fool acts forth all his spirit.**” But now the beauty of the *conflict!* A righteous man resists “*his spirit.*” He “**subdues it back.**” The verb means to “*soothe,*” or “*quiet.*” This stands with the adverb “*back.*” The Christian does not lose his wickedness, but checks it; and, in checking it, “*subdues it back.*” This is the progress of sanctification. “The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.” While the impenitent *acts out* all our nature, and it grows in strength, the Christian keeps checking it, yea, cutting it down, and thwarting it, and subduing it under. Such is the great fight of faith (2 Tim. 4:7). We are to keep under our body,

and bring it into subjection (1 Cor. 9:27). And so, though sin fights on, it loses. We gain upon it. We check it "back." O wretched men that we are, we still carry it. But still, thanks be to God, He is giving us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

But now; some of those deep philosophies formerly labored upon (24:7-9; 25:3). What is to be gained by all this? What is the use of such a conflict? Why did God suffer the advance of sin? And why not summarily interfere, and give the power for easier and more important victories? The idea of a great clinic occurs again. For there is to be *a digestion of the wicked before the King* (25:5). If God would study wickedness, or rather lead the universe to consider it, He has a use for the dead subject; He has a function for lost sinners. Hence blooms out the present system! For, in getting the mind into the facts, *all His instrumentalities must be "wicked men":*—

- 12** A ruler, paying close attention to some
false thing,
will have altogether, as his ministers,
wicked men.
- ¹² If a ruler hearken
to lies, all his servants
are wicked.

In most of these Proverbs there are secular meanings. There is to be a spiritual superstructure, and secular scaffoldings are set up. A king who would ferret out wickedness, must have the knaves who are guilty of the acts, as, in some sort, his implements. Let a king be roused to suspicion, he will scarce find anything out, if the rogues quit work; because continued rascality is the field for the scent to lie in. This is the secular sense. The spiritual we have already pictured. The fancy that it refers to tyrants, and that it means, that "*if a ruler hearken to lies*" he makes all his courtiers "*wicked*" (E. V.), throws the Proverb quite out of its place. It has no more any connection, and no more any important sense; none whatever that is spiritual, or upholds a theory for the Book; no good grammar; no artless reading as a text. If these Proverbs are really deep, and we are to go after an astute deliverance, we prefer one which is a favorite with Solomon (14:7; 21:12; 29:16), that wickedness is destined for a lesson; and that, for

reasons not open to men, mere words are not sufficient to teach it, and gross facts must be the schooling for the universe. And so the Proverb :—Not for this world only, but for others: not for this age only, but forever; not for our part only, but for God's; *A Ruler, bending close attention upon sin, will have altogether as his ministers abandoned and ruined sinners.*

Nor is the Almighty altogether free from directing sin: of course a very mysterious feature of His sovereignty :—

- 13** The poor man and the oppressor fit together;
Jehovah enlightens the eyes of both.

¹³ The poor and the
deceitful man meet together; the Lord light-
eneth both their eyes.

We have had this idea before (22:2). “Oppresser;” literally, “*a man of oppressions*” (see v. 1). “The poor man;” spiritually, “*the impenitent*.” “Fit together;” as Pharaoh did, and Moses, and Potiphar, and all the Israelites, and “the chief butler,” in that pregnant tragedy of Egypt. “Fit together;” i. e., into one mighty plan. “Enlightens the eyes;” not sav- ingly, but naturally (Job 32:8); gives them natural life (Num. 16:22); gives them plain worldly wisdom (Is. 28:26); nay, (mysterious enough) does more than that. The poor lost one, and men that have seduced him; nay, to speak boldly at once, all forms of conceivable iniquity, “fit” into a common purpose. The King, intending a lesson, makes it perfect: not throwing sin into Hell, like a load of sand, in a promiscuous heap; but entering it there upon a list, that it may read like a great library; and that every form of possible iniquity may come out in the history of impenitence. Hell, therefore, will be as orderly as Heaven. Hell, therefore, will be as predestined as Heaven. Hell, therefore, will be as versatile as Heaven; embracing every phase of being. Hell, therefore, will be as prepared for as Heaven; the same God who “enlightens” the saints, *enlightening* also, in a far different way, the eyes of the sinner (let me not say how): but so ordering his gifts of a wide intelligence, that there shall be diversities of lusts, and realized forms for every corruption.

Yet God will be just :—

14 The king, judging the weak with truth,
his throne is set firm forever.

| 14 The king that
faithfully judgeth the
poor, his throne shall
be established for ever.

"With truth." That says everything. Solomon, having plunged into the depths, comes up always to strong ground to vindicate the Most High. Passing the facts of sin through every conceivable experience, He yet so holds "*the truth*" through the eternal labyrinth, as to keep His rectitude, and to "**set firm**" His government among the creatures. Nor let us be deceived. It is not "**His throne**" that is to be "*set firm*." That would be insane. It is we. He speaks after the manner of men. For us is the grand *Proscenium*. Hell is built up for us. "I know that everything that God doeth is for the universe" (Ec. 3 : 14). And though it is strangely fingered; yet, nothing can be taken from it, and nothing can be added to it. Its *fittings together* (v. 13) may be hardenings of human hearts, and blindings of wretched consciences; yet "*God acts that men may fear before Him*" (Ec. 3 : 14). Take no thought for His work, whether it be right, or whether it be cruel; for eternity will show, that He was all the time "**judging the weak with truth**," and "**[setting] firm His throne**" in the hearts of the creation.

Solomon still repeats, that laxity could never prosper. The brow of these great mysteries is fitting for that rigid theme. *Free bestowals would tear everything* (v. 4). There is nothing so harsh on earth as the menace of the Pit, except that free forgiveness that would fail to execute it:—

15 The rod and reproof give wisdom;
but a child, left to his own way, makes his
mother ashamed.

| 15 The rod and re-
proof give wisdom: but
a child left to himself
bringeth his mother to
shame.

The text is secular. Mothers and fathers have a right to claim it; and pastors to preach on it that way. But the cable line that joins the continents is important as a whole; and the sole anxiety of the quiet watchers at the shore, is to catch upon their glass the glimmer from the Single Current. Solomon would say, that the universe cannot go on as one universal sunshine; that there is a need for sad events; that "**Wisdom**" is a

glorious prize (8:11, 19); that she is ministered to, even by the wicked (14:7); and that, when the wicked are brought upon the scene, *free largess* is not a grace; but would **make** government "**ashamed**" (Ex. 34:7), and tear to pieces the whole of the creation (29:4).

A shadowing of this is suffered to appear in the present world. Where "**the rod and reproof**" are staid, and the bad actually "**made great**;" how woful the outbursting of iniquity:—

- 16** By the wicked being made great sin is made great ; but the righteous see clearer by their fall.

"When" (E. V.) might do here if anywhere. We had it so written. But really the other is more truthful. The word is "by," or *by means of*; as of the actual instrument. "**Sin is made great**" by the sinner being made great. And the reasons multiply. A sinner, "*by being made great*," is himself made a greater sinner; first, by the seductions of his worldliness, and second, by his superior accountability. And other sinners are made greater sinners; first, by his power to influence; and second, by the bait of his prosperous successes. Nothing could be plainer than that clause: but the second is the more weighty. "**By the wicked being made great, sin is made great;**" but "*the wicked*" are to be the only sufferers. "*The righteous*" are to gain by it. Sin is one of those cartoons of falsehood that are to inure to the teaching of the saints (v. 12; Gen. 2:9). With a quiet utterance, which has failed to be intelligently observed, Solomon states the benefit in a most philosophic way. They "**see.**" But **וְ** follows; and **וְ** has been entirely overlooked. They "*see by.*" Not as Gesenius would declare (*vid. חָזַק*), simply they "*see*" (E. V.); involving **וְ**, *idiomatic*, in the bare meaning of the verb; but, they *get to see by*, or they *learn*; in other words, they *get a lesson*. And not a *lesson* merely, but its result. They *get light*. This is the force of the preposition. "*By the wicked being made great, sin is made great, but the righteous see (that is, see clearer) by their fall.*" Gesenius gives many cases, but a *soupçon* of more than mere *seeing* is had

in each. **בָּ** asserts its presence, and lends the force of *being made to see by*, rather than (as when the verb *by itself* is used) nakedly to *see* (Ec. 12:3; see the other cases of Gesenius). *The greater sinners become, the greater sin becomes both in themselves and others : but the greater on that account their fall, and the greater the lesson derived to the righteous.*

If "by the wicked being great sin is made great" (v. 16), we are to remember this fact in family government. We are not to let our sons get too much exalted :—

- 17 Discipline thy son and he shall bring thee | 17 Correct thy son,
rest; and he shall give thee
yea, he shall give pleasures to thyself. rest ; yea, he shall give
delight unto thy soul.

Fathers are not only an emblem of the Almighty, but the Almighty is an emblem of fathers (Eph. 3:15). What He does they can often imitate. A King of *free bestowals* tears everything to pieces (v. 4). It should be a hint for parents. A stern "discipline," if not by a mere *man of reproofs* (v. 1), imitates the dealing of the Most High. "**Thyself;**" Hebraic, "**thy soul**" (E. V.). The text is pregnant. It implies that we give "**pleasures**" to the "**son**." And then, by force of the one-ness, they flow back also to one's "**self**."

It is true, what a child does not know he is not accountable for. We post him to his undoing. If a man positively knows no law, he can never be punished; nevertheless, the Proverb teaches, that it is better to know the law, and to keep it :—

- 18 Through there being no vision a people are | 18 Where there is no
let free; vision, the people per-
but blessed is he who observes a direction. ish : but he that keep-
eth the law, happy is
he.

This is only a hypothetical case; for there are no such "**people**." Nevertheless there is such a principle. Just in proportion as men do not know, they will not be punished. Paul and Solomon are in full accord. "They that sin without law, shall also perish without law; but they that sin in the law shall be judged by the law" (Rom. 2:12). These Proverbs

elsewhere have taught the same doctrine (8 : 36). Men might all perish ; but some less terribly, from a difference of light (13 : 13). All men have some light (Rom. 1 : 20) ; and that which they actually have, is all that they shall answer for in the day of final account.

Still, there is a form of light that we will be punished for the lack of, though perhaps, even thus, the statement is not altogether true. There is a form of ignorance that will exactly proportion our guilt. It is ghostly ignorance, or the absence of spiritual knowledge. Perhaps I may still say that a man is punished for what he has, and not for what he has not. A man who knows of this ignorance, and has light enough to know his need of light, has enough to give account for in that, without being supposed to suffer for a profound negation. Be this as it may, there is such an ignorance. It exactly grades our sins. It is the measure of our depravity. The profounder it sinks, we sink. No man need sink or perish. There is a remedy. "The word is nigh [us]." The light we need is hungering to break in. But mere "**words**" will not convey it to us. We cannot talk a man into the Celestial Kingdom : for "The legs drag after the lame ; so does a Proverb in the mouth of fools" (26 : 7) :—

- 19 By words a servant is not disciplined ;
for he may attend, and there be no real
response.

19 A servant will not be corrected by words ; for though he understand he will not answer.

"**Attend.**" Hence arises the responsibility I spoke of (v. 18). No man is so ignorant that he has not had some teaching ; that he has not *attended*, so as to lay up some truth. But his spirit may not have been reached. Talking afterward may only injure him ; for it makes him more intelligent ; and, on the principle stated, it makes him more liable for the truth that he possesses (Rom. 1 : 20) : moreover, *attending*, and not **responding** (Ez. 33 : 31), it hardens him. "The letter killeth" (2 Cor. 3 : 6). It stirs up an exercise of mind, which, blunted, wears out that much more susceptibility. Solomon is putting his finger on all sorts of New Testament considerations (2 Cor. 2 : 16; Heb. 6 : 4). We are to use the word of God (v. 18), but alas ! prayerfully. And, above all, we are to avoid those prema-

ture hopes, which may be made to spring from mere intellectual impressions.

For, says the Wise Man,—what began with “**words**,” may end in “**words**.” What was wrought in mere syllables of speech, may work itself off in that way:—

- 20 Seest thou a man hasty in his words?
hope for a fool is outside of him.

| 20 Seest thou a man
that is hasty in his
words? there is more
hope of a fool than of
him.

We are to witness in the next chapter a rare picture of this (30: 10). It would give food for the weightiest preaching. We conjure men not to make promises to repent; but rarely think of such promises as so intolerably fatal. False vows! We warn against them. But here they are set upon in a direct assault; and made to answer as the very pests of the soul. “**Outside**.” See remarks in a previous chapter (26: 12). The texts are twin texts; and the evils, though well discriminated, are to be considered twin evils; the one, as being *wise in our own eyes* (26: 12); and the other, as being “**hasty in [our] words**” (29: 20). The experimental teaching is singularly deep. The man “*wise in his own eyes*” cannot be got at by argument; for, seeing nothing to change, he counts himself all right for Paradise. While the *man hasty of speech* sees everything to change, and means to change it. As with the seed in stony places, he heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it (Matt. 13: 20). Repent? He means to. The subject of religion? He has that just now in view. Who can get at him? Bid him inquire after Christ. He is doing it. Like Jannes and Jambres, he does not decry the truth, but casts down his rod, and imitates the pretensions of the believers. So, Scripture takes these two conditions of the spirit.—the openly cavilling one, and the eagerly promising one, and casts them into a mould. It says, that they are deadly, both; for that the *hope of a fool lies outside of either*. Of course God is supreme. He may still convert. It would be insane to prophesy. But the Wise Man makes bold to declare, that, if life begins, it must be “*outside*” of all this. These are dead points in the orbit of a spirit. Like the limbs that are decayed, life must begin some-

where else in his intelligent nature; for these promises that swarm so upon our lips, are such elements of death, as to preclude, rather than make probable, the soul's salvation. "*Outside of.*" This is the force of יְהוָה, to which we have already adverted (Job. 11:15; Micah 3:6).

Above all, other people are not to feed hope. God does not; and we are to imitate His more truthful discipline:—

- 21 He that delicately brings up his servant from a child, shall have him become a son at the length. ²² He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child, shall have him become his son at the length.

How many servants in the church are counting themselves sons! "**Delicately brings up.**" This is an exact translation; "*trains or treats delicately.*" A training in the church, as part of a system of compensation, pays for itself sometimes by this horrid risk. We manufacture professors by tender training, when they are young. And if anybody asks, what we distinctly mean by this, we say, that motherly tenderness, and churchly tenderness, eagerly desiring children's conversion, train them into it in superficial ways; bring before them all the doctrine of the gospel; bring before them all the terrors of the law; tempt them by all the "*honey*" of the church (25:27); and inveigle them to profess; tempt them to hope; and, by a sort of taking-for-granted confidence, dandle them upon the arms of promise, and really bait them into a false profession. We have sometimes feared that false hope might be the curse of women. There are so many more of them in the church, that, unless the balance of the two sexes is to be lost in another world, and men utterly outnumbered, there must be some delusion of the sort I speak of. Bold vice may curse men; and soft confidence betray women. The timid fears of the weak may predispose them to be deceived; and what the rougher nature shakes off, may cling to woman, viz., luxurious hopes. "**He that delicately brings up his servant from a child, shall have him become a son at the length;**" and no persons are trained more tenderly than timid girls. Pastor, and members, and parents, and even worldly people, and officers of the church, take for granted that they will be saints. They seem to *profess*, generally.

Women, trained in the Church, seem rarely out of her communion.

The Wise Man is quick to imply, that there is room for rougher treatment; that down at the bottom, under all this gentle nature, there may be a “cause for strife;” and that “great sin” may lie embedded under this tender treatment. We ought to let in upon it the anger of the Almighty:—

22 An angry man stirs the cause of strife; | ²² An angry man
and a wrathful one, great sin. | stirreth up strife, and a
| furious man aboundeth
| in transgression.

Proverbs, as found in the Bible, are *allegoric maxims*. Let us hold to that definition. The Pentateuch is *allegoric history*. The Psalms (many of them) are *allegoric songs of praise*. Isaiah is an *allegoric prophecy*. Christ's are *allegoric miracles*; just as He had also *allegoric parables*. John's were *allegoric pictures*. Going back now, the maxims, and the history, and the song, and the prophecy, and the miracles, are all real; the maxims, true of common life, at least the most of them; there being a real crossing of the Red Sea, and a real David in Adullam, and a real prophecy of Babylon, and a real healing of the withered arm; and yet all parables. The very word *proverb* is the same as the word *parable*. In 26:7 and 9, and Ps. 49:4, such is the translation (E. V.). The God who made history, made it to carry double; to beam out its own present lights, and to shine forth also with its more distant illuminations. Hence the present trivial Proverb. Of course the “*angry*” stir up “*strife*;” and of course the “*wrathful*” occasion “*sin*.” But, like some dirty brown, a nothing in itself, but a gem in a Claude's picture, so this paint, poor if secular, is beautiful in the text's connection. Solomon is closing all with deep pictures of our inner exercise; and here he suggests, that a soul *delicately brought up*, and baited into a sort of sonship, when it has really nothing of the kind, would find that out if it had God's *wrath* let in upon it; that there exists low down a “cause for strife;” that it possesses, (buried under,) “*great sin*,” viz., all that it has ever cherished; and that a little rougher dealing than it has had, would bring all that out; that God's *wrath* let in upon it

would stir up, not *strife* (see 15:18; 16:28), but (**נ** prefix) “cause for strife;” and “sin;” not creating “sin” (both clauses refer to what exists already); but *stirring it up*. Under the delicate treatment (v. 21) these things have lain hid. But “strife” in its “cause,” and “sin” in its greatness, have existed all the time. Fierce conviction brings them out; while delicate treatment smothered them, and concealed them from the sinner.

“**Pride**,” then, is the sum of all falseness:—

- 23 A man's pride shall bring him low; but one low in spirit shall get hold of honor. | ²³ A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

Before dismissing the last verse, a few points:—“*An angry man* ;” literally, *a man of anger*; one of the genitives that expound verse first. “*Stirs up* ;” primarily, “*scrapes*.” The “cause” exists, and “anger” scrapes it, or irritates it. “Cause for strife;” as we have already said, one word. The **נ** prefix, implying *ground* or *cause*, clears up several passages, where in the E. V. it has not been noticed (see Class XXXIX). “*Wrathful one* ;” literally, *master or owner of wrath* (Prov. 23:2). “*Great sin* ;” not, “*aboundeth in transgression*” (E. V.). That would make the “*furious man*” (E. V.) himself the culprit; but these delicate communicants veil deeply “*great sin*,” and Solomon would teach, that frank treatment might have made it show itself. The next verse, which we placed above, that we might trace its connection, needs but two remarks; first, that “*bring low*,” in the first clause, means a form of *lowness* into which a sinner is crushed at the last day: while “*low*,” in the second clause, means *lowness of spirit*: and second, that “*get hold of honor*” is translated (E. V.) “*honor shall uphold*.” Two masculines, and grammar all right in other respects, favor both meanings; but ours has the order, and moreover (what should arbitrate the doubt), ours has the primary signification.

If these *delicately raised* professors (v. 21) have these buried sins; these tenderly raised scions of the church are really keeping company with vile iniquity. As all such doctrine implies

that they have the means to find this out, the next Proverb rebukes them as in fault, and warns them as enemies to themselves :—

- 24 He that walks with a thief, hates his own self.
He hears the oath, but does not inform.
- Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not.

“*Thief;*” an inspired title for sinners (Zech. 5:3; Matt. 21:13). “*Self;*” literally, “*soul*” (E. V.) (see Job 9:21). “*He hears the oath, but does not inform.*” All who attended the synagogue, might hear about this every day. If sin was committed, men were made to clear themselves by “*oath*” (Lev. 5:1, etc.). If they swore falsely, and did it through ignorance, and found it out afterward, they were to bring a serious sacrifice (Lev. 5:4-6). If they swore falsely, and knew it, or, if they *heard* a false “*oath*,” and knew *about* it, and “[did] not inform,” they were to bear their very worst guiltiness (Lev. 6:3, etc.). This is plainly the allusion of our text. As though men had two natures; as though the *delicately raised servant* were the one, and the “*thief,*” with bad heart, the other; the hypocrite is held to be secretly aware of his falsities. If he allows himself to be deceived, there is serious wilfulness. “*He hears the oath.*” By the very body of the Master it is he that takes it. The “*thief*” is in his very bosom at the time. He wrongs the Church: but the great victim of the wrong is much nearer than his fellow men. “*He hates his [very] self;*” that is, in Eastern language (13:24), he produces the results of hatred. What a grand text for an ante-communion. The hypocrite has the means of knowledge. “*He hears the oath.*” He goes to the church, and takes it. He has been witness as to the “*thief,*” for he has robbed God, and treated Him fraudulently in His very presence. “*He hears the oath*” intended to make a clean heart, and buries everything. And for a life time in the church, he is taking that “*oath*” for exculpation, and all the time harboring the iniquity.

Now one influence is to account for this. Solomon sets his pen right upon that one. It is “**a man's fear**” that drives him to be a hypocrite. “*Fear*” is the great counterfeiter. Men

want this world; but “*fear*” scares them about the next. Women have more “*fear*” than men. Women, I fear, have more hypocrites than men. Men would be more led by fact, and less driven by the apprehensions of impenitence. “*Fear*,” therefore, is the great counterfeiter. And by this we mean, not that it impels, simply, but that it furnishes the raw material. It makes the counterfeit out of its very self:—

- 25** A man's fear brings a snare;
but he that trusts in Jehovah shall be set
on high.

25 The fear of man
bringeth a snare: but
whoso putteth his trust
in the Lord shall be
safe.

When we say that “*a man's fear*” becomes the counterfeit, we mean literally, that a man's repentance may be nothing but “*fear*.” Eight soldiers were ordered to be shot. We attended them in their agonized moments; and they would have deceived the very most penetrating. They were melted into humble grief, and yet buoyed by the most clear-put confidence. The days passed on, and they were led out to be shot. Below, in the court, there were three suddenly pardoned. The five seemed Christians to the last; the three, by night, were in a blasphemous orgie. We did not see *all* this. It may have been highly colored. But the chaplain at the post told me that it was an old experience. “*Man's fear*,” therefore, “**brings a snare.**” In the low-ground of earthliness, the plain is full of such. To “**be set on high**,” we must get a **trust** that shall manifest itself as being “*in Jehovah*;” and to be “*in Jehovah*” it must accord with His nature. Repentance may wear a close analogy to molten terror; and if it begin in that, it may school itself, out of timidity, upon a mere decency of life. We must *trust Jehovah*. To trust Jehovah, we must know Him. To know Him, we must be like Him. To be like Jehovah, we must hate sin. To hate sin, we must have a discernment of holiness. And to do that, the whole burden of this Book is, that we must have the light of the knowledge of the glory of God as it is in the face of Jesus Christ. Those poor soldiers had but the pestling of “*fear*,” and “Though thou bray a fool in a mortar in the midst of grits with a pestle, his folly shall not depart from him” (27: 22.)

Hence follows another instance of a divided Divinity (see 24 : 21 ; 25 : 2). King alone, God is often looked at. King alone, men often trust to Him. Looked at merely as "the Ruler," men fear Him, and court Him, and simulate a selfish piety. This is the whole English of hypocrisy. As the Arbiter merely of a law, God is the idol of myriads of devotees. This, after all, is the true philosophy :—

- ²⁶ Many seek the ruler's favour; but every man's judgment cometh from the Lord.

The fakir, or dungeoned monk; the hook-swing, or victim of Juggernaut or the Ganges or Suttee; every form of false religion in this land or any under the sun, are the “many [seeking] the Ruler’s favor.” And, in a way that all must think graphic, Solomon portrays now the nature of the whole deception. If I profess Christ, let me ask, Do I do more than “*seek the face of the Ruler?*” My fear; it is but that. My service; it may be but that. My faith; it may be only that; directed by an intellectual soundness in the creed. Because, put together, first, fear; then, knowledge; next, decency; then, gospel nurture: some day, deep conviction; and, afterward, delicate bringing forward by the church (v. 21); and you have the ingredients of a hope that is just as false as Pagan sorceries. “**A man’s judgment is from Jehovah.**” “*A man’s judgment;*” i. e., *a man’s verdict* that makes him righteous in the end. “*Is from Jehovah:*” not from “*the Ruler*” only, but from all the noble attributes of the Deity as the Most High. To crouch to Him simply as King, or to court Him simply for His law, is the wide hypocrisy. To trust Him as “*Jehovah,*” is to love Him in His superior excellences.

Now to judge whether we do this, Solomon leaves but one other criterion:—

- 27** An abomination to the righteous is a wicked man ;
and an abomination to the wicked man is he that is righteous in his way.

How do we tally with that? In other words,—Religion is a

love, not an expedient. The question is, not,—Do we fear Hell? but,—Do we love holiness? Our flight to Christ must be out of our iniquity, as well as out of our danger. We will not declare that self-interest is not for the saints; and that they have not been driven by “*fear*;” nor that the law is not a school-master to bring them to Christ (Gal. 3 : 24). No; for verse twenty-second means this very thing. But we will declare, that these are no part of their religion. Till they strike the clear waters of love, all else has been mere digging; and if a man really wants to know whether he belongs to Christ, let him take this last verse. “**A**bomination to the righteous is a wicked man.” Does he really hate wickedness? Again, “an abomination to the wicked is he that is righteous as to his way.” Mark the difference. “*The way*” is mentioned. In the first clause directly the “*wicked*” in himself; in the second clause only “*the way*.” How singularly careful! “*The wicked*” might say truly,—he does not hate the “*righteous*” (see all this discussed 1 : 22, *et alibi*); but he hates “*his way*.” He cannot bear to walk in it. Articulately given, we are left, therefore, with these tests. Is “*the wicked man an abomination*”? And then, reversing it, Is “*the righteous man an abomination*”? or (as we might deny that in terms), is it “*an abomination*” to us to be left forever nothing but the “*righteous [man's] way*”?

CHAPTER XXX.

Hitzig took the first part of this chapter, and looked at it in its original consonants. He determined that the Masorites had missed the sense; that the first verse was not a string of names; that the consonants must be divided differently; that there must be a different vocalization; and that, thus treated, the passage had a consistent sense, which dropped most of the proper names, and made of them a more didactic signification. Stuart adopted his view; and so, we see, has Zöckler, in his recent work. The following is Hitzig's translation, as given in the

English of Stuart :—1. “*The words of Agur, the son of her who was obeyed in Massa. Thus spake the man :—I have toiled for God, I have toiled for God, and have ceased.*” 2. *For stupid am I more than any man ; and I have not the understanding of men.* 3. *For I did not learn wisdom ; nor did I become acquainted with a knowledge of the Most Holy.* 4. *Who ascendeth to Heaven, and then descendeth ? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists ? Who hath bound up the waters as in a garment ? Who hath established the ends of the earth ? What is his name, and what is his son's name, that thou shouldest know him ?*” Our objections to this are, first, that it is a bold resort for the discovery of a sense ; excusable, if necessary ; but always yielding in likelihood to a reading that employs the Masoretic text : second, that it is an unlikely reading for “*massa*,” and a very unusual one indeed for the mere accusative, which is translated “*for God* ;” third, that it gives no perspicuous meaning ; and fourth, that it gives none whatever in unity with the texts that follow. This last is not a damning difficulty, but becomes so in the case of Hitzig; because the meaning that he gives is but little, except as a high exordium. We discard, however, with almost equal confidence the Old Version, which has been retained by most commentators as better than Hitzig's alteration. The difficulty of the Old Version is, that it multiplies the unknown so. Nobody knows “*Agur*.” Nobody knows “*Jakeh*.” Nobody knows “*Ithiel*,” or why the name should be so solemnly repeated. And nobody can give any account of “*Ucal*.” It is not probable that a *king* would be so thoroughly unknown. Moreover, nobody knows “*Lemuel*” (31: 1, 4); for we treat similarly the thirty-first chapter. Nobody knew Melchisedec, and nobody knew Job. Our argument is not a perfect one : but it evinces high probability ;—because both Job and Melchisedec are *made* familiar, and are thoroughly explained in their appearance on the stage. But what vital meaning do we get from “*Agur* ?” Where is the *force* of what is so gravely brought upon our view ? It struck us that we would take the simple Hebrew, and enquire its meaning. We would accept nothing as a proper name till we found it destitute of sense : and, following no intricate conceits, we would fail of a directer meaning, before

we went off into anything more difficult. It is astonishing how facile the result. We believe that all was the work of Solomon. We believe that there was no such man as "*Agur*," except the Great Man, Christ Jesus. We believe there was no such "*king*" as "*Lemuel*." We believe everything is the work of Solomon, as much as any Proverb. If it appear Arabic, or extra-Hebraic, no matter; Solomon gathered his material over a wide surface. We believe it is distinctly what it says, "**The Prophecy.**" We count it as all finished in the four first verses, and "*Jakeh*," and "*Ithiel*," and "*Ucal*," and "*Muel*" in the next chapter (vs. 1, 4), we would be quite willing to read that way, if like "*Lo-ammi*," in the Prophet, or "*Lo-ruhamah*," words confessedly significant (Hos. 1:8, 9), it were thought euphonious, or wise, to give them without a translation. But what the Hebrews saw, why not our people see? Certain it is that the words to a Hebrew were about as follows:—

- 1 Words of I-Fear, Son of the Godly; The Prophecy:—

The Strong Man speaks to God-with-me, to God-with-me and to I-am-able.

- 2 Forasmuch as I am more brutish as to myself, than a man of the better sort, and have not the intelligence of a common man,

- 3 and have not been taught wisdom, and yet know the knowledge of holy things;

- 4 who has gone up to heaven and come down?

who has gathered the wind in his fists?
who has bound the waters in a garment?
who has set firm all the extremities of the earth?

what is his name, and what is his son's name? Because, Thou knowest.

THE words of Agur
the son of Jakeh, even
the prophecy: the man
spake unto Ithiel, even
unto Ithiel and Ucal.

2 Surely I *am* more
brutish than *any* man,
and have not the un-
derstanding of a man.

3 I neither learned
wisdom, nor have the
knowledge of the holy.

4 Who hath ascended
ed up into heaven, or
descended? who hath
gathered the wind in
his fists? who hath
bound the waters in a
garment? who hath
established all the ends
of the earth? what *is*
his name, and what *is*
his son's name, if thou
canst tell?

Let us examine, first, the language, and then the result as to the sense. "**I-fear.**" This is the very simplest Hebrew. It actually occurs in Deuteronomy (32:27). The verb is the familiar one נִיר, which means primarily to *turn out of the way*. And this *turning out of the way* for danger, is a prudent and an innocent character of "fear." "*Agur*," therefore, or "*I-fear*,"

with the light we get afterward, marks Himself as the “**Strong Man**” of the next clause; the “**Son of the Godly**,” because descended out of the loins of the Church (see Rev. 12:5); and the “**Man**” (just as “**Muel**” (31:1) is God and man); contemplating the low humanity of Christ, which is about to express its wonder at its amazing knowledge. “*Godly*,” from a root meaning to *venerate*: “*Jakch*”: it is the singular, and means “*the pious one*;” which keeps in view what is too often forgotten, that Christ was not the son of the abandoned, but, as His mother expresses it (31:2), “*the son of my vows*.” “**The Prophecy**”; not needfully *prediction*, as in the present case, but an *oracle*, or *vision*, or *inspired elation*, of any kind. The words that follow constitute “*the Prophecy*;” for though the *speech* of the “**Man**-Christ does not begin till the second verse, the very names in the next clause are predictive; and the most vitally so of the whole of the vision. “**The Strong Man**”; *strong*, though weak; “*Strong*,” because He sees in Himself such wonderful conditions. The word “*strong*” is implied in the noun that is selected. “**Speaks**;” oracularly. It is the solemn, poetic, and, in fact, rare expression. “**To God-with-me**.” That the Man Christ should address the Deity has innumerable precedents. If it were necessary, we could imagine the Human Nature as addressing the Divine Nature; for that really occurs, in high Eastern vision, in the Book of Zechariah (3:4-6, 7, 8). In lofty texts, like this, it is perfectly admissible. Christ speaks of His Divine Nature (Jo.3:13); and speaks of it as being where the Man Christ Jesus was not, viz., in Heaven. But the four h
verse of this chapter mentions both Father and Son; and, therefore, in this, which is so near it, it is not necessary to distinguish. “*The Strong Man*” speaks to the “*God*” which was “*with [Him]*,” and calls Him “*Ucal*,” which means, “**I-am-able**.” There was a powerful Divinity in Christ; and that He was wondering about. His mother repeats the wonder in the after case (chap. 31:2). The whole is a grand “*Prophecy*” of Christ in the form of a grand inquiry. “*Agur*” makes it of “*Ithiel*.” That is, the “**Man**,” “*I-fear*,” goes searching into the “*God-with-me*.” There is an “*I-fear*” part, and an “*I-am-able*” part, of His one Grand Person; and these parts

speak even in the New Testament with the humility (Jo. 5 : 19, 30), and with the splendor (Jo. 8 : 58), that belong to each. “**Forasmuch as;**” the simple particle *because*. “**I am more brutish;**” i. e., more the mere untaught animal. “**As to myself;**” i. e., as to my human self; for it is the “*Strong Man*” that speaks. The emphasis is laid by the mere expression of the pronoun. “**Than a man of the better sort;**” that is, than an educated, refined man, which Christ was not. “*The better sort*” is expressed by the noun selected (see Class XLIX). “**And have not the intelligence of a common man.**” That is, He had not the education usually given to the more lowly. The *commonness* of the humanity is expressed again by the noun (see Class XLIX). “**And have not been taught wisdom.**” Here the emphasis is on the “*taught*.” “**And yet know the knowledge of holy things.**” The meaning of the whole is, that He had singular light. He confronted the doctors in the Temple; and, as a little child, was a miracle. Whence came this? This is what the “*Prophecy*” represents as a surprise. “**Who has gone up to Heaven and come down?**” Somebody has. The “*Strong Man*” addresses this appeal to the “*God-with-me*;” and ends it significantly:—Who is it? “**Who has gone up to Heaven, etc.?**” “**Because Thou knowest.**” One word back in the third verse:—“*know the knowledge.*” “We have not altered this; nor said,—“*have the knowledge*” (E. V.), which would be better English; because this seems an intentional form (see Chap. 1 : 2; also 17 : 27). The words that Christ gave to His disciples, God gave to Him (Jo. 17 : 8, 14, 25, 26); and Christ, in saying so, would include all senses; the outer word; the inner word; the outward blessed revelation; and the inward teaching. *He knew the knowledge*; i. e., He discerned in perfect ways what the Spirit without measure was there to impart. *Going up to heaven; gathering the wind; binding the waters; and setting firm the extremities of the earth,—were the work of a Divinity.* Some Divinity had been at work upon Him. He applies to the *Able One*, to the *God with Him*, to explain a low man’s wonderful knowledge: and then adds, as significant of the reply,—“*Because Thou knowest.*” It will be seen that we unlimber the third verse in part, as we have in similar cases

(1:3; 2:2). All lies buried, without. Other commentators string the whole in one. This change is highly important; and it is upon this unlimbering of a clause, that the whole passage reveals its signification. There remains little to add. These are the words of "*I-fear.*" The rest goes on as from Solomon. This first, too, is his own lucubration. We might mark three verses (2, 3, 4) with quotations; and these would be the speech of the "*Strong Man.*" Mary, in the thirty-first chapter (v. 2), wonders about her Son. She asks, under awful mystery, "*What is my Son? and what, etc.*" That will come, therefore, as a helpful confirmation. (This apart, however). We have altered no word. There is a slight irregularness in the word "*Ucal.*" But, with that exception, we have gone out of our way not even for a pebble; and it seems that in this close of the Book, God's Spirit deepens upon the King; and, whether he borrows some Balaam-oracle, or puts together imagery from varied source, this strikes our mind as certain, that the smoothest and most artless rendering, makes Christ, in this chapter, and His mother, in the next, to be pictured, in "*prophecy,*" as revolving what manner of "*Strong Man*" Jesus was (Luke 1:66).

The division makers have given none between these last sentences and the next. And doubtless Solomon meant a connection, in binding us to that theory of God's "words" which has encouraged us to the literal taking of these last in the way that we have been bold to do:—

5 Every speech of God is tried.

He is a buckler to them that take refuge in
Him.

5 Every word of God
is pure; he is a shield
unto them, that put
their trust in him.

6 Add thou not unto His words;

lest He use thee for purposes of reproof,
and thou be shown up as false.

6 Add thou not unto
his words, lest he re-
prove thee, and thou be
found a liar.

"**Speech;**" not the usual term for "*word*" (E. V.), but more literally, "*speech.*" What God utters, therefore, is the thing intended. "**Tried;**" literally, in a furnace; i. e., by heat, like ore. "**Every.**" God never utters anything carelessly, or meaninglessly, like men. Nor does He speak speculatively. "**He is a buckler.**" What He talks to us about is our deliverance. In

this solemn light, “**Add thou not unto His words;**” for they are vital. Mere speculation might brook denial; but where eternity hangs, be careful. “*Add thou not unto His words, lest He use thee for purposes of reproof;*” literally, “lest He reprove by thee.” Gesenius would translate like the English Version; but we have examined the cases with **א**, and they mean, to *make a reproof out of a thing* (Is. 11:4; 2 Sam. 7:14). So, to *see by a thing* (29:16). The meaning is, God’s words are not only “tried,” but vital. He who spoils them by altering their sense, will not only be made an example of in *reproving* others, but in the end will find that he has mistaken his “refuge.” So, then, we have a useful Proverb; but we have it reflecting its lights upon the “words” just noticed (vs. 1-4). Those strange syllables are “tried.” There is a meaning in every one of them. “Agur,” and “Jakeh,” and “Ithiel,” are like gold altogether refined. We have a right to clutch at it down to its very dust. And that guarded too from the thought of its being mere *wonder*; for these are names of deliverance. This very “God” is a “buckler.” This very “Man” is a deliverance; if we espouse the truth, and make no additions. And this very “Man” will make a use out of us all. For, if we despise His words, then He will *make a reproof of us, and show our falseness.*

Next comes what is called the ‘*Prayer of Agur.*’ We conceive it to be no part of the “*words of Agur*” at all; but a continuance, as, indeed, there has been all along, of the words of Solomon. Solomon, having stated that the words of God are tried, and that they are practical; for that “He is a buckler to them that take refuge in Him;” puts His deliverance to the test by this model prayer. It embraces everything. Solomon asks “**two things;**” first, piety; and, then, Providences that will favor it, and build it up. In asking piety, he puts it in that dual form so common in Scripture (3:3; Jas. 1:27); and that fits it to the Two Tables of the Law. In asking good Providences, he seizes that golden mean most favorable to an advance in grace. Let us listen to him:—

7 Two things have I asked from Thee.
Refuse me not before I die.

⁷ Two things have I
required of thee; deny
me them not before I
die:

- 8 Remove far from me naughtiness and fraud.
Give me neither poverty nor riches.
Let me break off the food appointed for
me.
- 9 Lest I be full, and deny,
and say,—Who is Jehovah?
or, lest I be poor, and steal,
and wrest the name of my God.

8 Remove far from
me vanity and lies;
give me neither pover-
ty nor riches: feed me
with food convenient
for me:

9 Lest I be full, and
deny *thee*, and say,
Who is the Lord? or
lest I be poor, and
steal, and take the
name of my God *in*
vain.

The Two Tables of the Law are met by the expressions, “**naughtiness and fraud.**” “*Naughtiness*” would not be badly translated “*vanity*” (E. V.); for the word grew to mean what was *empty* and *vain*; and, as such, it would well represent, not loving God, but violating the First Table by worshiping “*vanity*.” But the primary meaning of the Hebrew is not “*vanity*,” but something positively bad. Then it grew to mean *deceitful*; and then *vain*, as something that miserably deceives. “*Vanity*,” therefore, is not primary; and Solomon chooses the word as meaning positive *badness*, as well as the quality of being *vain*. “**Naughtiness**” is a capital word, if we could restore it into the English; for it has the quality of being *naught*, as well as a tincture of positive evil. What Solomon prays against is violation of either Table; against “*naughtiness*,” as rejecting God; and against “*fraud*” (literally, *an affair of lying*), as injuring our fellow-men. And then, as the other thing prayed for, he asks for favorable Providences. “**Give me neither poverty nor riches.**” He states the reason. “**Lest I be full and deny;**” and thus encounter the curse of those “who trust in riches” (Mr. 10: 24); “**or lest I be poor, and steal, and wrest the name of my God.**” Let us consider more closely some of these expressions. V. 7. “**From thee;**” an irregular suffixed pronoun (see Ps. 22: 25). “**Refuse;**” literally, “*withhold*,” and referring to the thing, not the person. “**Before I die;**” as we would say, “*As long as I live.*” “**Let me break off;**” “**Feed me with**” (E. V.). The verb means to *tear off*. This is the Hiphil. It is a most familiar and specific request. Give me little ahead, and nothing behind. “**Feed me**” as with the manna. Let me *tear off* each morning, literally, *the food of my appointment*. “**Lest I be full,**” and of course feel no need of Jehovah. “**Or**

lest I be poor, and steal ;" and, as men were called upon to do in Leviticus (Lev. 5:1, etc.; see 29:24), take oath of my innocence, and thus unlawfully "*wrest the name of my God.*" More generally, lest under the pressure of world-care, "*I steal,*" which is a common name for all impenitency (29:24; Zech. 5:3; Matt. 23:14), and then *snatch at* (which is a literal rendering), or *seize*, the name of God; i. e., set up a hollow claim to being justified before Him.

One of the forms in which this is done is merely to "*tongue*" God; i. e., to be guilty of the cheat of only a lip service (Is. 29:13). "*Every word of God is tried*" (v. 5); and it is exceedingly important to get all straight, and to *add nothing* (v. 6) to His gospel intimations. But there is such a thing as merely *tonguing* Him; i. e., having all clear as to mere doctrinal sense, and *seizing upon the name of God* (v. 9), i. e., claiming to be justified by Him; and letting it all amount to calling Him Lord, Lord, and not doing the thing, that He says (Luke 6:46). We are presented with a picture of this, as beginning family degeneracies :—

- 10 Give not tongue service, as a servant to his master,
lest He curse thee, and thou be held guilty.
10 Accuse not a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty.
- 11 A generation after will curse its father,
and not bless its mother.
11 There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother.
- 12 A generation after that will be clean in its own eyes,
and yet not washed from its filthiness.
12 There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.
- 13 A generation still after, O how lofty have become its eyes,
and its eyelids lifted up.
13 There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes ! and their eyelids are lifted up.
- 14 A generation further yet will have swords for its teeth, and knives for its fangs,
to devour the troubled from the earth, and the needy from among men.
14 There is a generation whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw-teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.

This is a picture of household undoing. It is a most terrible one. There is a similar picture in Isaiah (Is. 5:8-25). His six portraits differ, but are co-ordinate, with this; and seem, like this, never to have been noticed by a single commentator. The terrible point in the picture by Solomon is its beginning. It

begins by lip-service. “**A generation**” of men; i. e., a father and a mother; have family worship, and go through the forms of religion; but are simply *tonguing* God. They profess belief, and go to the communion, and read the Word, and are outwardly moral; but, consciously, if they would confess the truth, they deal in words, and are not actual in their devotions. Their children become conscious of this; for it is a thing that steals out from our very tones. It begins an order of corruption. In “**a generation**,” parental influence has been lost. They “will curse [their] father, and not bless [their] mother.” “**A generation [more]**;” and they feel no need of religion. They “will be clean in [their] own eyes, [though not at all] washed from [their] filthiness.” “[Then] a generation;” and this contented sin will have grown into actual pride. “**Oh how lofty [are their] eyes, and [their] eyelids lifted up.**” “[Finally] a generation” utterly fallen and corrupt; “[having] swords for teeth, and knives for [jaw teeth];” horribly oppressive and unfeeling; “[devouring] the troubled from the earth, and the needy from among men.” This is the fruit, in four hereditan- cies, of a beginning in *tonguing* God. Let us go back for the detail. “**Give not [mere] tongue service.**” This is a single word. It occurs but twice. It has been greatly misunderstood. The other case is in the Psalms (Ps. 101:5). It is translated “*slandereth*” (E. V.). It will be noticed that here the English Version has it, “*Accuse*.” “*Accuse not a servant to his master.*” The whole sentence in the Psalms is:—“Whoso privily *slandereth* his neighbor.” The word has a very certain origin. It is the root of what is familiar, viz., the word for tongue. It means, originally, to *lick*, then to *use the tongue upon*. In the Psalm, therefore, it would seem to mean, “*He that tongues me, or uses his tongue upon me, or gives me a tongue service as his friend, him will I cut off.*” and it mightily confirms this version, that the suffix, “*me*,” appears in the original, and has to be treated as *paragogic* by other commentators. It means that Christ, in this Messianic Psalm, will not tolerate lip-service. “*He that gives me a tongue-service, him will I cut off.*” It must be distinctly remembered that the only instance of the word is there, and in the present Proverb. Now,

with Solomon, the form is the imperative,—*Tongue not, or “give not tongue-service, as a servant to his master.” “As a servant.”* The noun here is in apposition to the understood pronoun. “**Lest He curse thee;**” i. e., lest thy Master curse thee. “**And thou be held guilty;**” i. e., after all thy confident and long-continued professions. Then follow the pictures in the descent. V. 11. “*A generation after.*” This is all one noun, without an article. It is not an adverb, because it is the nominative to “*will curse;*” but it expresses lapse, or sequence. It derives from a verb meaning to *go round* in a circle. Each of these prefatory nouns (vs. 11–14) mark “**a generation [still] further;**” and the force of the whole is to show, that these family advances take place in degeneracy during each “*generation*” of time. “**Curse;**” not *indecent cursing* (Ec. 7:22). **Scorn** (13:1; 14:6) and **hate** (8:36) are like words. They are predicated of the most gentle. The meaning is, *practical cursing*; the turning away from parental influence. V. 13. “**Have become;**” a dexterous *preterite*, showing that the change *has been* going on. The negligence of the last stage has been growing into the pride of this present one. The last clause resumes the future. Verse fourteenth would set the climax; though the corresponding picture in Isaiah is, perhaps, more specifically dreadful (Is. 5:22–24). “Wo unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink; which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him. Therefore, as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff; so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust.” The Christian professor, conscious of *lip-service* (v. 10) in his house, should take warning. These are the consequences increasing after him.

For Decay is **INSATIABLE.** It has no bottom!—

15 The horse leech has two daughters, Give,
Give.

These three things are never satisfied;
four have never said,—Enough :—

16 Sheol; and the enclosure of the womb;

15 The horse-leech
hath two daughters,
crying, Give, give.
There are three things
that are never satis-
fied, yea, four things
say not, It is enough:
16 The grave; and
the barren womb; the

- the earth, which has never filled with water; and fire, which has never said,—Enough.
- 17** The eye that mocks a father,
and has a contempt for obeying a mother, the ravens of the brook shall bore it through,
and the children of the eagle shall eat it.
- earth that is not filled with water; and the first that saith not, It is enough.
17 The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.

The quality of these four things is, that they are indefinitely greedy: so of sin, that it has no limit. See how it hungered downward in those four generations. It will continue deepening in Hell. It begins with tongue-service (v. 10). It sinks to bitter malignity (v. 14). It will never rest. The Pit was called "bottomless" (Rev. 9:1). And, therefore, he that is near the top, beginning with the earlier stage (v. 11); *he that curses his father*; reproduced in quainter metaphor (v. 17), he "that mocks a father;" may as well know all at once. "*The horse-leech has two daughters:*" there is no hope for him, but through the grace of God. "*The eye that mocks a father, and has a contempt for obeying a mother, the ravens of the brook shall bore it through, and the children of the eagle shall eat it.*" Such is the meaning of the whole passage. It should be said that we are tying in bundles here in exact agreement with the division-makers. We claim evidence in this. Under the English Versionists, if we inspect their rendering, verse 10th has no connection with vs. 11-14; verse 17th has no connection (I mean in sense) with vs. 15, 16; and verses 32d and 33d have none with the three preceding and with each other. These all, as can be seen, show no interval in the MSS.; and these all, as will also be discovered, blend consecutively in the sense we give to them. Now again for specific criticisms. "*The horse-leech*" (E. V.). This, like the "*grey-hound*" (v. 31), and like many other words but once occurring, has to be largely guessed at. What specific word we use for them is less important. The emblem may be judged of from the root. "*The grey-hound*" (v. 31) is something *narrowed at the loins*, and may mean an *athlete* (*Wood*), or a *girt horse* (*De Wette*). It makes little difference. So, "*horse-leech*" comes from a verb meaning, to *stick*. It may mean a *vampire*. It may mean a *ghoul*, or

imaginary sprite, that sucked the blood. It makes little difference. “*The Aluka*,” perhaps, just giving the Hebrew, would be the best to venture (De Wette). All we need see in it is *insatiableness*. And this branches again into four kindred metaphors. “*Sheol* ;” from the verb to *ask*. It never stops asking. “*The enclosure of the womb* ;” universally translated “*the barren womb*” (E. V.). The noun “*enclosure*” is from a verb to *close*, which is used in several texts where *barrenness* is called the *closing of the womb* (Gen. 16:2). Still, it only means “*enclosure*.” That is all that is in this substantive; and it occurs but very rarely. “He was taken from *prison* and from judgment” (Is. 53:8). The word “*prison*” is this simple vocable. The idea of special insatiableness in the “*barren*” seems to be a physiological fancy. Moreover, the Hindoos have a Proverb of just these particulars, and in that we hear nothing of sterility:—“The fire is not sated with wood; nor the great sea with the streams; nor the God of death with all the living; nor the beautiful-eyed with men.” The Septuagint, therefore (vide), is probably the more correct. “*The earth* ;” rained upon but never the fuller; “*and fire* ;” that will burn to the last timber! These four never say, *נִזְנָתָן*; i. e., *Plenty!* or, *A competency!* So the Maelstrom of being once corrupt. Solomon teaches, *Obsta principiis*. “*The eye that mocks a father* ;” i. e., beginning away back in incipient undutifulness (v. 11); that “*eye*,” in the hunger of its corruption, thus early is the same as lost. He paints it as a dead “*eye*” staring up from a heap of corpses. He sets the wild birds in motion. “*The eye that mocks a father, and has a contempt for obeying* (literally, *despises to obey*) *a mother, the ravens of the brook*” (sometimes, “*valley*” E. V.; but *small valley made by a brook*: we prefer “*brook*” because more characteristic of the *raven*) “*shall bore it through*” (just like “*the ravens*;” that *dig*, or “*bore*,” with the peculiar motion of their beak); “*and the children of the eagle shall eat it.*” A terrible picture of death in but the first step!

And yet how UNCONSCIOUS! This is the next idea. The “*adulterous woman [eats]*” (v. 20); that means, in Solomon’s language (5:3; 9:17),—Impenitence enjoys peace; and, without dreaming of insatiable decay, “[wipes] her mouth and [says]

I have committed no naughtiness." The four next types, therefore, are images of this natural concealment:—

- 18 These three things are quite beyond me; yea, four I cannot mark:—
 19 the way of the eagle in the heaven- .
 the way of a serpent over a rock;
 the way of a ship in the open sea;
 and the way of a man in a girl.
 20 In such a way has the adulterous woman
 eaten, and wiped her mouth,
 and said,—I have committed no naughti-
 ness.
- 18 There be three
things which are too
wonderful for me, yea,
four which I know not;
 19 The way of an
eagle in the air, the
way of a serpent upon
a rock, the way of a
ship in the midst of the
sea, and the way of a
man with a maid.
 20 Such is the way
of an adulterous wo-
man; she eateth, and
wipeth her mouth, and
saith, I have done no
wickedness.

Of course, this is important doctrine. Men are sinking, and do not trace it. They are insatiably seduced; and yet actually dream that they are advancing heavenward. The pictures are simple. "**Quite beyond me:**" primarily, a verb to *separate*. Hence, *separated* from me. It came to mean "*wonderful*" (E. V.); but here, nearer the primary, let us say,—*too hard for me*, or, *separated*, so that I cannot see. "**Mark;**" usually, *know*; but here, very expressively, the old English, "*mark*." As for example,—"**the way of an eagle in the heavens.**" It closes, and I can no longer "*mark*" it. In the ether, afterward, it is "*quite beyond me.*" "**A serpent over a rock.**" It glides; but there is no track. "**A ship in the open sea;**" literally, "*in the heart, &c.,*" meaning *out from shore*; in Greek,—"*in the midst*" (Matt. 14:24). The waters close, and where the ship tracked is now untraceable. So with a secret amour. "**Girl;**" not, of course, *a maid*," E. V. (the Hebrews called "*a maid*," **תִּבְשֵׁרָה**); but **תִּבְשֵׁרָה**; i. e., as derived from its root, *pubescens*, a *marriageable woman*. These are all instances of blank concealment; and so, the Wise Man implies, is sin: it is *unconscious*. Life shuts behind it, with no track upon the ocean. The Serpent glides, and leaves no print upon the rock (14:12). "*In such a way has the adulterous woman eaten, and wiped her mouth, and said,—I have committed no naughtiness*" We have not been unreasonable in imagining the "*Strange Woman*" to be Impenitence (2:16). Here, anything else would

be inconceivable. “*She has eaten*” (see same figure 9:17). “*And wiped her mouth.*” We remove outward evidences of sin, and have little thought of it. We *have done* this (preterite) at any given moment of our history. That terrible process that the earlier verses depict (vs. 11–14) takes care, as part of its effect, to muffle its own footsteps as it advances in our spirit. “*Naughtiness*;”—a philosophic word. Sin is *worthlessness*. So we are to express it. And so does this root, and others in the original Hebrew.

Sin is not only *progressive* (11–14), and *insatiable* (15, 16), and *insidious* (18–20), as the last three *fascicula* have quaintly set forth; but it is also **INTOLERABLE**. The universe, as of its very nature, must spue it out, as a **disquieting** evil. (For like images, see 19:10; 21:9; 29:21; Matt. 15:26):—

- 21 Under three things the world has been disquieted;
and under four she will never be able to bear up:—
- 22 under a servant, because he becomes king;
and a vile fellow, because he is sated with food;
- 23 under a hateful woman, because she is married;
and a handmaid, because she dispossesses her mistress.

21 For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear:

22 For a servant when he reigneth, and a fool when he is filled with meat;

23 For an odious woman when she is married, and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress.

The figures begin to be interdistinguishable. Perhaps they were before; but there is danger of fancifulness. Here, however, they are starkly discrepant. If our corruption were tolerated, four things would belong to it:—first, *universal dominion*; second, *universal satisfaction*; third, *universal fellowship*; and fourth, *universal disorder*. These four things are incompatible; but the plainer the *intolerableness*. First; *universal dominion*. There belongs to every saint universal subjection of the creature. If we are Christ’s all things are ours (1 Cor. 3:21). See also Rom. 8:28. If the lost are to be adopted, it realizes the first image,—“*a servant [becoming] king.*” He that is “*clean in [his] own eyes, and yet not washed from [his] filthiness*” (v. 12), is a rebel against Heaven; and yet aspires to a place in it that

would make all things subject to him ! This is the first *intolerableness*. The second is, *universal satisfaction*. No good thing is to be withholden (Ps. 84 : 11). The saint is to be universally happy ! This is the next *intolerableness* :—“**a vile fellow, because he is sated with food.**” The third is, *universal companionship*. The corrupt, if they are tolerated, must mingle with the hosts of the blest ! and we are pleased to find an emblem which carries us many chapters back, and helps us with many passages. It is the *Termagant Woman* (21 : 19). We have always understood that as Impenitence. Impenitence is intolerable in its very self. It is not tolerable to the impenitent. A perpetual dropping on a very rainy day (27 : 15); or, in fact, a life upon the ridge-pole (25 : 24); would be better than impenitence, and heaven itself. How intolerable to foist the impenitent upon the saints. The lost man, therefore, in aspiring to be a Christian, is aiming at the third *intolerableness*; i. e., *universal fellowship*; which answers to the third emblem of the four : viz., “**a hateful woman [undertaking to be] married.**” We have but one more point; and that is, *universal unfairness, or disorder*. If the base go up, the good must come down. If the vile can be honored, the saints have no property in God. They are virtually **dispossessed**. This is the fourth lesson. There is a fourth thing by which “**the world has been disquieted.**” I beg you to notice the past tense. The pretensions of the impenitent *have already* tried our faith. And the tendencies of such things answer to the fourth mischief included in the fourth emblem of the Wise Man; which is, now, the last; viz., “**a handmaid [that] dispossesses her mistress.**” Let us again travel back to bring up critical peculiarities. “**Under;**” the regular preposition for *under*. Our English Version translates it “*for.*” “**Disquieted;**” *perturbed*; the same word introduced into a previous Proverb (29 : 9) to describe not *sending peace but a sword* (Matt. 10 : 34). “**Bear up;**” intransitive (Ps. 89 : 10; Hab. 1 : 3); not the transitive “*bear*” (E. V.); otherwise we could not parse “*under.*” “**Because;**” not “*when*” (E. V.). The world *could “bear”* the ungodly, and make “*a servant*” of them, but for their undertaking to reign. So in all the clauses. “*Vile fellow.*” See the four words translated “*fool*” (E. V.),

and their different meanings (Class XLIX). “*Hateful woman*;’ feminine passive participle of the verb to *hate*. “*Dispossesses*.’ See Deut. 2 : 12. The word sometimes means to *possess*; never, perhaps, means, “*is heir to*” (E. V.; see Gesenius); but decidedly means, to *dispossess* (Zeph. 2 : 9; Gen. 45 : 11). The whole meaning is, that (1) *progressive*, (2) *insatiable*, and (3) *insidious* corruption, must be a thing (4) *intolerable* to the universe.

But how to get rid of it! It must be by miracle! It must be by being “**made wise**” from above:—

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>24 These four are little things of earth;
and it is such, that are wise, being made
wise.</p> <p>25 The ants are a people of no strength,
yet they make sure their food in the sum-
mer.</p> <p>26 Conies are a people not strong,
yet they fix their dwelling in a rock.</p> <p>27 There is no king for the locust,
yet he goes forth making fair division of all.</p> <p>28 The spotted lizard takes hold with his
hands,
and such as he is in king’s palaces.</p> | <p>24 There be four
things which are little
upon the earth, but
they are exceeding
wise:</p> <p>25 The ants are a
people not strong, yet
they prepare their meat
in the summer;</p> <p>26 The conies are
but a feeble folk, yet
make they their houses
in the rocks;</p> <p>27 The locusts have
no king, yet go they
forth all of them by
bands;</p> <p>28 The spider taketh
hold with her hands,
and is in kings’ pal-
aces.</p> |
|--|--|

Differences, now, easily appear. (1) *poverty*, (2) the *danger*, (3) the *discord*, and (4) the *poisonous character*, of sin, are the four particulars; and they point the marvel of forgiveness and acceptance for the sinner. “**Wise, being made wise.**” That is a grand Evangel; and it comes exactly from the Hebrew. First (1), under *poverty*. “**The ants are a people of no strength;**” and what a wild conceit, that the tiny worker works by his own wit; and, by a deep philosophy, forecasts the Winter. He is “*wise, being made wise.*” What a wild conceit that the impenitent frames by his own wit the wisdom of the Gospel. Second (2), his *peril*. “**Conies are a people not strong; yet they fix their dwelling in a rock.**” Making grace plainer is impossible. Third (3), our *discords*. “**The locust,**” with “*no king,*” moves over the green with all his rapacities, without stopping to quarrel with his neighbor. Devouring in his mighty hordes, who ever saw him break sheer rank to fall upon the

rest? “*The locust [has] no king, yet he goes forth making fair division of all.*” And so we, with our strange lusts, and our strong rapacity for selfishness, are gradually moved into the line. “[We do] all eat the same spiritual meat” (1 Cor. 10:3). “Our fellowship is with the Father” (1 Jo. 1:3). “We are all baptized by [the] one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13); and, though we have no earthly “*king*;” but, on the contrary, everything earthly to increase our discords; yet, like “*the locust*,” we are moved on from above. We are “*wise, being made wise* ;” and go feeding in our rank, with the godly instinct giving light within us. Lastly (4) our inward *poisons*. Think of the best of us as in Heaven! “*the spotted lizard in [a] King's [Palace]!*” These four are the wonders of our state; and the Bible seems to teach that it is meant thus. “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings [there is to be] ordained strength” (Ps. 8:2). This *projet* is very elaborate:—For “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in His presence.” But now then, more critically:—“*Made wise* ;” the Pual participle. “**Make** sure ;” from a verb, primarily, to *set up*. *Lay up* might answer as the meaning. “*Conies* ;” rather a guessed specification (vs. 15, 31) among many timorous ruminants. Their *house* (literally) fixes them in the list, as belonging to a class that are among the *rocks*. “*Making fair division of all*” (literally, *of all of it, or of all that belongs to him*). We translate differently, for a better idiom. “*Making fair division* ;” simply, *dividing*. We vary here, too; lest it should mean *cutting* or *dividing* the grass as they go. The starting point is not that they go “*in bands*” (E. V.), for they do not; but that, throwing themselves into a mighty line like the knives of a mower, they bite, each one in his path, and waste no time in snatching from each other. “*The spotted lizard*” is an *apax legomenon*; but we get the sense when we trace it to a root meaning to *poison*; and when we conceive it as a *poisonous reptile*, marvellously out of place in a *king's pal-*

ace. “Such as he;” emphatic pronoun (28:24). “Takes hold.” This is the same verb used in verse ninth for *wresting* the name of God. It means *seizing*, or *griping*, with a *clutching grip*. The poisonous reptile *gripes* in that way his hold “in palaces.”

Now if this be a picture of the sinner; and the poor wretch, so venomous in his nature, can lay “*hold with his hands*,” and get into the Palace; how wise for Solomon, as a good earnest preacher of the truth, to close by a practical application. He does so in the next passage:—

- 29 These three make each step good,
yea, four make good their going:—
- 30 a lion, mighty among beasts,
and that turns not back for any;
- 31 a grey-hound, or a he-goat,
and a King! Do not thou stand against
Him.
- 32 If thou hast been withered down, by lifting
thyself up,
and if thou hast been meditating with a
hand upon the mouth,
- 33 forasmuch as pressing milk presses out
whey,
and pressing the nose presses out blood,
so pressing down passion presses away
strife.
- 29 There be three
things which go well,
yea, four are comely in
going:
30 A lion, which is
strongest among beasts,
and turneth not away
for any;
31 A grey-hound; an
he-goat, also; and a
king, against whom
there is no rising up.
32 If thou hast done
foolishly in lifting up
thyself, or if thou hast
thought evil, *lay thine*
hand upon thy mouth.
33 Surely the churning
of milk bringeth
forth butter, and the
wringing of the nose
bringeth forth blood;
so the forcing of wrath
bringeth forth strife.

Man being so wretched, as pictured by those weak things of the earth (v. 24); so poor; so exposed; so discordant even with himself; so poisonous in his inward nature; if there be a chance to clutch with his hands, and get fixed in the King’s Palace, how insane (see 33d verse) to have “*strife*” with that Palace-Sovereignty itself. “[There be] three [things that] make each step good;” and this is a picture of the Almighty. There is no resisting Him. “[There be] four [that] make good their going;” i. e., that will move along in their track, whether we will hear, or whether we will forbear: the “lion,” which is strong; the “grey-hound,” which is fleet; the “he-goat,” which is bold, “and a King! Do not thou stand against Him.” “A lion [which is] mighty among beasts, and that turns not back

for any." This is exegetical of "[making] good their going" (v. 29). "*A grey-hound*" (literally, *a girt in the loins*, see commentary v. 15); "or a *he-goat*;" as though the difference were not so great between these last. But all to usher in the "KING;" strong, like the "lion;" fleet like the "hound;" bold, like the "he-goat;" and Who, in other parts of Scripture (Ez. 1:5, etc.; Rev. 4:7), has the different features of His Providence portrayed by just such animal natures. "*Do not thou stand against Him.*" "*If thou hast been [humbled by thy pride], and hast [begun to think deeply], thy hand upon [thy] mouth,*" then remember, that "*as [the] pressing [of the] milk [drives out the whey]; as, with the bleeding nostril, the pressure of the finger expels "the blood;*" so the laying hold of thy vile passions, and smothering them with all thy weight, shall drive away thy "strife" with the Almighty. It is a grand conclusion! "*Make good.*" This is the literal Hiphil. It is idiomatic also in the English. It means,—God goes where He pleases. *Nulla vestigia retrorsum.* "*Each step,*" simply, *a step.* "*Do not thou stand against Him.*" This seems all *en règle*; and the wonder is that it should have been translated differently. "*Against whom there is no rising up*" (E. V.) is irregular every way. The verb is an orderly imperative; and the particle is not the positive or absolute negation, but one confined to the more optative sense. The expression is, *with Him*, rather than, "*against Him*;" but that does not alter the sense (see Ps. 55:18; 94:16), and is as noticeable in both translations. "*If thou hast been withered.*" The verb means that, primarily. "*Done foolishly*" (E. V.) would have to be altogether a derivative sense. "*Lay*" (E. V.) is not in the Hebrew. "*Evil*" (E. V.) is not necessarily implied. If thou hast fainted or been *wilted down* (see Ps. 1:3; 37:2) through "*lifting thyself up,*" and art deeply thinking, thy "*hand upon [thy] mouth,*" then, Solomon implies, thou art a fitting subject for my final adjuration. "*Churning*" (E. V.); not so at all; but most distinctly, "*pressing.*" "*Whey;*" a word nowhere so translated. But how can the *pressing of milk cause to go out from it*; for that is the expression (it is the Hiphil of the verb to *go out*),—either "*curds*" (Gen. 18:8; see Gesen.) or "*cheese*" (Zöckler). "*Butter*" (E. V.) is out of the question

The word in each clause is, *cause to go out*. It is spoken of the “*blood*.” It is spoken of the “*strife*:” and so, therefore, of the “*whey*.” We must look at the internal evidence. And, besides, there is a similar evidence, almost always, where the word occurs. “He asked for water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth *whey* in a bowl of the mighty” (Judg. 5:25). How could he use “*butter*” (E. V.) as a hasty drink? Again, “*brooks of honey and butter*” (E. V., Job 20:17). How could *butter*; or how could *curds* or *cheese*,—run in a brook? There are but eight cases of the word. None of them forbid, and the only cognate strongly favors, our meaning (Ps. 51:7; * see also Jos. Ant. 5:5, 4.). However, it is not important, unless it be for the meetness of the imagery. “*The nose*,” a homely figure, that won favor, we can scarce doubt, because the dual appears in the same verse as the word for “*passion*.” “*Passion*,” literally, *the two nostrils*; usually translated *anger* (Ps. 103:8); but meaning, as all these words do (Hos. 7:5), any high “*passion*” (see 1 Sam. 1:5, Gesenius). God does as He pleases (v. 29). He is our Great Benefactor. If “*wise*” to appease Him, we must be “*made wise*.” He is ready to *make us wise*, just as He gives wisdom to “*the ants*.” How mad to quarrel with Him. As the pressure of milk drives out whey, so that it ceases to form; as the pressure of a wound drives out blood, so that it ceases to flow; so bearing all our weight upon our passions will drive out strife; and, with assiduous care, the reptile may be in the Palace of the King.

CHAPTER XXXI.

But now the other Messianic oracle! “*Lemuel*” (E. V.) is not a name in history. Moreover “*words of Lemuel*” (E. V.) is awkward, because the “*words*” were not of the imagined “*Lemuel*,” but of “*his mother*.” “*What, my son?*” (E. V.). How can that be a word “*of Lemuel*”? Again (v. 33),—“**Give not thy strength**

* “His words were softer than oil.” “Smoother than *curds of milk*,” says Gesenius. We say, “*whey*.”

unto women." That is the speech of the "mother;" and it is not natural to say, that it is "*the prophecy that his mother taught him*" (E. V.); because it was what she uttered, rather than anything that she made him learn. Hitzig, therefore, goes off upon another rendering like his former one (chap. 30), which succumbs to even more difficulty. Ours, on the other hand, is also as before. And as *words about somebody* seems to agree better with the style of the passage, than *words which some intended personage may be supposed to speak*, we have examined as to whether we could not disengage the ְ, and make it, *words about Muel*, and not "*words of Lemuel*," as in the English Version. We had two difficulties:—First, "*words*" is in the construct. The construct usually precedes a genitive. Happily, not always, however (see Green, Gr. § 255 § 257; and 2 Ki. 5: 9; Ezek. 13: 2). It sometimes precedes a preposition: and in that case, often, this very preposition ְ. Getting over that difficulty, then, we, however, fall into another. The fourth verse has "*Lemuel*" a second time. This time it is Lemoel; and perhaps, that is significant. "*It is not for Kings, O (Lemoel) Lemuel*" (E. V.). We must either take such an absolute name after all, or expound again the intrusive ְ. To go to the foundation, therefore, we hunted after *Muel*. There was no such word. But there is a word *mo* (Job 9: 30); and it means water; and like the word מִזְבֵּחַ (water), it means "**seed**" (Num. 24: 7; Is. 48: 1); i. e., *animal seed*. *Mo-ab* means a man far too incestuously much the *son of a father*. *Mo-el*, to leap to the meaning at once, would mean the "**seed of God!**" Let us give our translation:—

- 1 Words in respect to the Seed-of-God, a King;
a prophecy in agreement with which His mother disciplined Him.
- 2 What is my son? And what is the son of my womb?
and what the son of my vows?
- 3 Give not thy strength to women;
or thy ways so as to destroy kings.
- 4 Let it not be for kings, for the seed of God;

THE words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him.

2 What, my son?
and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows?

3 Give not thy strength unto women,
nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings.

4 It is not for kings,
O Lemuel, it is not for

- let it not be for kings to drink wine;
nor for princes; or strong drink:
 5 lest one drink, and forget what is com-
manded,
and set wrong the cause of any of the sons
of misery.
 6 Give ye strong drink to him that is being
lost;
and wine to the embittered in soul.
 7 Let him drink, and forget his wretched-
ness,
and remember his trouble no more.
 8 Open thy mouth for the dumb man,
to plead the cause of all the children of a
change.
 9 Open thy mouth; judge righteousness;
and plead the cause of the afflicted and
needy.
- kings to drink wine,
nor for princes strong
drink;
 5 Lest they drink,
and forget the law, and
pervert the judgment
of any of the afflicted.
 6 Give strong drink
unto him that is ready
to perish, and wine unto
those that be of
heavy hearts.
 7 Let him drink, and
forget his poverty, and
remember his misery
no more.
 8 Open thy mouth
for the dumb in the
cause of all such as are
appointed to destruc-
tion.
 9 Open thy mouth,
judge righteously, and
plead the cause of the
poor and needy.

The passage, in this view, would be “*a prophecy*” (v. 1), and “*a prophecy*” predictively imagined to be in the mouth of Mary, the “*mother*” of the “*Seed-of-God*.” We read that the miracles about John led all the people to wonder what manner of child this should be (Lu. 1:66). We read, that Mary kept all the facts about the shepherds, “and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:19). We read, that the Angel Gabriel told her that her’s should be the “*Seed of God*” (Lu. 1:35). For when she wondered, he said:—“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy Thing that shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.” Solomon, therefore, is on the same track with the Evangelist. “*Words in respect to the Seed-of-God, a King.*” So far, all is good. We have but to add “*Muel*” to the other names of our blessed Redeemer. “*A prophecy;*” of course a most literal one. “*In agreement with which His mother disciplined Him.*” “*The prophecy that his mother taught him*” (E. V.), has this difficulty, that the verb translated “taught,” means to correct, or *discipline*. It is not a verb suited for two accusatives. “*Which,*” therefore, is absolute; and is governed as by the “*cause-manner-and-instrument*” rule of the Latins. *Correct* is not a right term to apply to any

sins of Christ; but, analogously with a common child, He no doubt had His mother's *training*. First of all (v. 2), her training was colored by her marvel,—who He could be. “**What is my son? and what is the son of my womb? and what the son of my vows?**” She seems to have reached dim notions of Him; that He was “*a King*” (v. 1) and that He was to be a Founder of “**Kings**” (vs. 3, 4); that His success depended upon His *obedience* (vs. 3–9; see also Zech. 3:7); and that if He failed to obey, He would be giving His “**ways so as to destroy kings**” (v. 3). It is, therefore, a very elaborate gospel. She lets it appear also, that these “*kings*” are also the “**seed of God**” (v. 4); and that they also must be ruled by the same laws of obedience that had won everything under their Founder. But a gem of the passage is, a bright figure for this obedience itself. “**Give not thy strength to women.**” Before, adulterousness has been the type of all impenitence (6:32; Jas. 4:4). Here it is the type of all Christ's imaginable aberration. This very naturally! “My meat is, to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work” (Jo. 4:34). With Paul, *par eminence*, He could say,—“This one thing I do” (Phil. 3:13). He had positively no leisure for self. Nor has the Christian. Nor will they have through all eternity. Neither Christ, nor His people, will seek mere delight while ages roll. “Whether [they] eat or drink, etc.” (1 Cor. 10:31). We often think that Heaven will be a time of pleasure. Like the shimmer of a stream, it will not flow for the sake of the shimmer, but for its portage to the sea. Heaven will be a place of packed work; but so smooth, so grateful, so high, as a great joy itself; so smoothly oiled, so delightfully spurred forward as our very life; that the shimmer will follow the stream, as light its luminary. “She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth” (1 Tim. 5:6). And so, this “**wine**” of the fourth verse, and these “**women**” (v. 3; for it will be seen the figure shifts), are the great metaphors for these *propter se* pleasures. Christ will have none of them. So “*His mother [trained] Him.*” Paul speaks the like before the Governor. “He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come;” an exhaustive skeleton. “*Of righteousness;*” that is of our moral restitution; “of

temperance ;” that is, of resistance to the flesh ; for, being *temperate*, I mean yoking in mere pleasure, and spurring forward a zeal of consecration, is, after all, our sanctifying work. “ *Women*,” therefore, and all this pitching upon “ *strong drink*,” are for the sake of a sample. Mary stirs her Son for His grand work. It is not for Him to have a breath of prurient pleasure. Let Him waver, and He will “ *destroy kings*.” His must be a perfect obedience. He is to “ *open [His] mouth for the dumb*.” He is to “ *plead the cause of the afflicted and needy*.” Joy will follow : but as the shadow the substance ; as the shimerer the stream : as with the great God Himself, ineffable bliss ineffable practice of the purest rectitude. Nor was He to be peculiar in this; I mean *in duty*. “ *It [was] not for kings* ;” viz., those He should make “ *kings* ;” and, in a lower sense, the “ *seed of God* ” (for notice now the force of the second δ); “ *It [was] not for kings, for the seed of God ; it [was] not for kings to drink wine ; nor for princes ; or strong drink*.” That is to say,—All men are to be single-eyed in duty. Christ is our general model. “[Our] meat is to do the will” of our Father ; and pleasure must be the taste of this “ meat.” This is a pregnant passage. Not that being happy is wrong; not that turning aside to be amused is wicked; not that ascetic hardness may not be most particularly insane; but that we must turn aside to be refreshed for our work. We are not to “ eat in the morning ” (Ec. 10:16), as the ancients so deftly described it. We are to eat when meat is necessary ; meaning, we are to seek pleasure when it is needed to refresh. For Ecclesiastes goes on, “ Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength and not for drunkenness ” (Ec. 10:17). So follows that terrible sentence ;—“ *Give ye strong drink to him that is being lost*.” The word is the actual participle. It is not “ *ready to perish* ” (E. V.), but actually “ *being lost*.” “ *Being lost* ” is the primary signification (Ps. 119:176). Give pleasure, thus madly on its own account, to men who are going down to Hell. “ *Let [them] drink*.” It suits them. “ *Let [them] forget [their] wretchedness*.” It is a horrid imprecation! As when Christ said to Judas, “ That thou doest do quickly ” (Jo. 13:27). “ *His*

trouble no more." Alas! that is the restless longing. We are no extremists for temperance. But this text would be a sad one to quote in defence of spirits. The meaning is,—Pleasure; here tropically meant both by "*wine*" and "*women*,"—is not to be lusted after on its own account. We are not to "**drink [it], lest [we] forget what is commanded, and set wrong the cause of any of the sons of misery.**" But we are to leave it reigning madly among the "*lost*." "*Let [them] drink.*" It befits their nature; "*let them drink and [try, if they can, to] forget [their] wretchedness, and remember [their] trouble no more.*" "*Seed-of-God;*" *Mu-el*: more regularly *mo* (see v. 4; also Job 9:30). A *u* however would be Phenician (see Gesen.). It may be made *mu* to distinguish Christ from the other "*seed-of-God*" (v. 4), viz., His royal people. "*What, my son?*" (E. V.); not, "*what shall I say, my son?*" (Rosenmüller and Umbreit), but (more grammatically, i. e., without anything to supply),—" *What is my son?*" not even saying, "*Who?*" but "*What?*"; a pronoun of still higher wonder. As the "*Strong Man*" wonders about Himself (30:1), so Mary wonders about the "*Seed-of-God*," that was the "*son of [her] womb.*" "**Vows.**" Hannah (1 Sam. 1:13) and Elizabeth and Mary seem all to have been rarely pious; and to have made very special "*vows*" about the birth of their respective children. Elizabeth "hid herself five months" (Luke 1:24) after her conception, which answers to no custom of her people; and was at the beginning of her pregnancy; and could have been for nothing but for prayer. What an extraordinary continuance of prayer! No wonder that John was the greatest man ever born (Matt. 11:11). Moreover, she says, that she had been praying before, and attributes her very praying to the Almighty. "Thus was the Lord dealing with me (that is, thus was He leading me to pray) in the days wherein He looked on me to take away my reproach among men" (Luke 1:25). This is a new view, but we believe a just one. It was not a modest hiding for one socially a recluse; for there was no such custom; but an instant resumption of prayer the moment she saw her first long vigils crowned with success. Her first Retreat had won her a child. Her second won her his piety and greatness. So, doubtless, Mary prayed (L.u. 1:28, 30; see

also, as to Zacharias, Lu. 1:13; hence Prov. 30:1—"son of the godly"). "So as to destroy." If Christ by possibility sinned, it would "destroy" His dynasty. The very conception seems profane; but He Himself appears to have alluded to it; for He tells His disciples to watch and pray, lest they *entered into* (His) temptation (Mark 14:38). He was girding Himself for Gethsemane. "*Enter into temptation*" is no idiom for personally being tempted. Moreover, "*that which destroyeth kings*" (E. V.) cannot be made out of the original. "*Let it not be*" (v. 4). We introduce the imperative instead of the English Version,—"*It is not,*" because ~~שׁא~~, as we said awhile ago (30:31), is not for the *indicative*. It is an *optative*, or *imperative*, negation. Moreover, not having expounded "*kings*" as an intended example for her son, as does the English Version, we find nothing preferable in an indicative sense. "*Seed-of-God*" (v. 4); the regular *mo*, as we have stated; to indicate "*seed*," perhaps, in a more prosaic sense. "*The kings*" are less mystically the "*seed*," than "*THY SEED*, which is *Christ*" (Gal. 3:16). "*Or*" (v. 4). The word is a puzzling one. It may stand for an infinitive. It may mean to *desire* (De Wette, Rosenmüller). But it looks so much like "*or*," that we have marked it that way; though, as it will appear, in a somewhat abnormal position. "*The cause*." Christ's great work is *the cause of the miserable*. "*Embittered in soul*" (v. 6), does not mean in Hebrew *sad*, but *bitter*, or *hostile*. *Fierce*, *vehement*, says Gesenius; as *strong* stands in antithesis to *sweet*. (Jud. 14:14). "Lo I raise up the Chaldeans; that *bitter* and *hasty nation*" (Hab. 1:6). "Lest *angry* fellows run upon thee" (E. V., marg.: "*bitter in soul*;" Jud. 18:25). "Mighty men *chafed in their minds*" (E. V. marg., "*bitter of soul*;" 2 Sam. 17:8). The meaning seems to be,—Let *embittered* sinners have pleasure, and see if that will bury their "*wretchedness*." "*Wretchedness*;" literally, "*poverty*." "*Trouble*;" literally, "*toil*." "*Children of a change*;" *those appointed to a change*. "*Children of*," however, has a wide circle of meaning: as "*children of wrath*" (Eph. 2:3) for example, and "*children of the devil*" (1 Jo. 3:10). It may mean, *suited to*, or *appointed to*, or *subject to*; or *beginning to be under*; or possibly, all these together. "*Appointed to destruction*"

(E. V.) comes nowhere near the sense. In David (Ps. 102 : 26) it is translated, “They shall *be changed*” (E. V.). The idea is that Christ’s “*kings*” are “*children of a change*;” and as such are distinctly opposed to those that are “*being lost*” (v. 5). “*The dumb*,” is the man that cannot speak for himself, but needs an Intercessor. “**Judge righteousness;**” as Christ does when He builds a happy verdict. This “*judgment*” or *verdict* is the “*bruised reed*” of the Prophet Isaiah; for Christ builds it upon His own sinlessness, and He had to wrestle for that in the Garden of Gethsemane (see remarks v. 3). It was promised that He should not “break the bruised reed” (Is. 42 : 3); neither did He; for, though He cried out in agony (Matt. 27 : 46) about God’s forsaking Him; and though He begged the disciples to pray (Matt. 26 : 38-40); yet He was able to come back from the embowered olive-trees saying:—“It holds off” (*ἀπέχεται*); or “it has passed” (through His resisting “unto blood striving against sin”); and He was able to say to them, “sleep on now, and take your rest” (Matt. 26 : 45): another trial is over; and with more cheerful eye to feel that much through His struggle, and to announce the coming of His perfidious betrayer (Matt. 26 : 46). Nine verses then (vs. 1-9) are a great Prophecy of Christ.

Twenty-two verses (10-31) are a Great Picture of the Church. We like to keep the “*Bride*” (Rev. 21 : 9) and the “*Husband*” (see also verse 11, below) together. It might mean “*a capable woman*.” Doubtless it does, secularly, and as the substance of the allegory. It might mean “*Wisdom*” (14 : 1), as opposed to “*Folly*” (9 : 13); or the “*Wise Woman*” (*allegorice*), as set over against the “*harlot*” (7 : 10). It might mean *the Church*, as a twin picture to *Muel* (v. 1), like the linkings in the Song of Solomon. In fact, piety is the same in all. And one might ask how we could possibly distinguish between (1) a pious female, (2) piety itself, and (3) a pious church; since the same colors must be laid on in the case of each of them. This does make us less anxious to distinguish among the three; but there are certain broad features, such as *buying a field*, and *planting a vineyard* (v. 16); such as *having a husband* (v. 11); such as *having done him good all the days of her life* (v. 12), which is true of the church;

such as *her children rising up and calling her blessed ; her husband also himself praising her* (v. 28); such as being a unit too, *she only being chiefly virtuous* (v. 30); which lead us, in spite of ourselves, to the conclusion, that this is the One Catholic Church of the Almighty. Let us begin the translation. There are as many verses as there are letters in the Hebrew. And each one in their order begins with one of them.

In the first place, she is a unitary church. There is none like her :—

- 10 Who can find a capable woman ?
So that her price is far above pearls.

| 10 Who can find a
virtuous woman ? for
her price is far above
rubies.

“ My dove, my undefiled, is but one (really, *in her very nature, one* ; there is an emphatic pronoun), she is the only one of her mother ; she is the choice one of her that bare her ” (Cant. 6 : 9). “ **Capable** ;” literally, a *woman of resource or strength*. Pharaoh says (Gen. 47 : 6) if there are any “ *capable* ” men among the brothers, they can be set over my cattle. Piety has many terms in the Bible (see 1 : 2-5). “ **So that** ;” γ; is rather *illative or consequential*, as in the next verse, than an equivalent for “ *for* ” (E. V.). She is *precious*, because she is so rare.

The next verse introduces her Husband, and in two aspects ; first as **having trusted her** (witness the emphatic past), and second, by way of consequence, which is the force of γ, as having “ *no lack of gain* ” :—

- 11 The heart of her husband has safely trusted
her ;
so that he has no lack of gain.

| 11 The heart of her
husband doth safely
trust in her, so that he
shall have no need of
spoil.

“ **Her husband** ;” of course Christ. He can safely *trust her*, because He secures her by His own Spirit. And He can truly make “ *gain* ” of her, because she will be His wealth. “ He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied ” (Is. 53 : 11).

- 12 She has been doing him good, and not evil, | 12 She will do him
all the days of her life.

Witness the preterite. Were it future, it might be true of individuals. But, as the preterite, it is only true of the church.

The new-born “[do] good” always. The man being impenitent before his conversion, did not *do “good”* always. The church made up of the new-born, has always *done good*. “*Doing good*,” seems not to be recognized, as it ought, as being a quality that absolutely *grades* the pious (Matt. 25:40; 1 Jo. 3:7).

The hypocrite **works** legally; the church “cheerfully,” or, as the literal Hebrew, *with pleasure*. That is the reason “kings” may not “drink wine” (v. 4), i. e., seek pleasure on its own account; and yet may be supremely happy:—

- 13 She has hunted up wool and flax,
and worked cheerfully with her hands.

| 13 She seeketh wool
and flax, and worketh
willingly with her
hands.

She “**has**” done it (emphatic preterite). It is not a purpose. Some saints think being ready to *work* is enough. She “**has**” done it. She has not said, that, if she had influence, she would be useful; or that, if she had money, she would give it liberally to the poor. But “she **has** hunted up wool and flax, and worked cheerfully with her hands.”

She has not yielded to mystery, or succumbed to the **far-off** nature of the faith. She has not been content with home morals, or the earthly maxims of men; but she has gone *far-off* for her sustenance; even to Heaven itself. “Man did eat angels’ **food**” (Ps. 78:25).

- 14 She has become like the ships of a merchant;
she brings her food from afar.

| 14 She is like the
merchants’ ships; she
bringeth her food from
afar.

This glorious “*food*” she does not bury. She feeds it to her people. She does this in the “**night**” of dark vision, when faith is but a feeble groping. This is a beautiful image. She does not yield to the cold torpid morning, when it is hard to get out of sleep: but she faces it:—

- 15 She rises, also, while it is yet night;
and gives a portion to her house,
and an allowance to her maidens.

| 15 She riseth also
while it is yet night,
and giveth meat to her
household, and a por-
tion to her maidens.

“**A portion**;” i. e., *a piece torn off*; corresponding to a previous Proverb,—“Let me break off the food appointed for me”

(30:8). Both point to an "allowance" (see last clause), which must be had each day; which cannot be kept till the morrow (Lev. 22:30); but which will breed worms (Ex. 16:20) like the manna from heaven, if the church encourages her people to live on it as belonging to the past.

She ventures too, and extends her area. She goes out and annexes other lands:—

- 16 She has considered a field, and takes it. Of the gain of her hands she has planted a vineyard.

16 She considereth a field, and buyeth it; with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.

Notice, I beg, the tenses. First, preterite; and then, in the same clause, future. The γ conversive does not make an absolute past, but a tense having a futurition from the moment of the preceding preterite. She looks before she leaps, "**She has considered, and takes.**" "**With the gain of her hands, etc.,**" i. e., on her work in the past she builds what is to come. "*Gain;*" literally "*fruit.*" "*Considered;*" literally, *schemed, reflected.*

Just here, though, she has a guard. Large enterprise dissipates, and brings in the world. Witness our prosperous denominations. She fences against that:—

- 17 She has girded her loins with strength, and strengthens her arms.

17 She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.

The γ conversive, again, is illative. "**She has girded her loins;**" i. e., she has begun that way, and the girdle all through Scripture is the "*truth*" (Eph. 6:14); not the "*truth*" in the letter, for that is the "*sword of the Spirit*" (Eph. 6:17); but the "*truth*" in the spirit, for that is the inward "*strength*" of the pious. "**She has girded her loins with strength, and [so she] strengthens her arms.**"

She is careful, too, to make no mistake; that she may not be strengthening her arms in vain. She keeps watchful even in the "**night**" of gloom and trial. She keeps "**her candle**":—

- 18 She has tasted whether her merchandize be good.

Her candle goes not out by night.

18 She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.

"**Tasted;**" this is the literal Hebrew. She risks nothing upon any false wares. She *tastes* everything before she buys. She buys nothing in the "*night*." Or, if she does, she seeks for all possible light, and buys it with all possible scrutiny. "She **has tasted.**" It is a thing of the past. She did it at her first conversion. Her piety is an affair of *taste*. She trusts none until she *tastes* it. And this is her continual care, "[*to taste*] **her merchandize whether [it] be good;**" literally, *because* it is "*good*;" and to buy as much of it with the right *taste*, as she is possibly able.

Aiming at verse twentieth, where she is represented as going abroad with good works, the more common-place (24:1-6; 28:18) verse nineteenth is interposed, where she is painted as hard at work at home. She is no Mrs. Jellyby, leaving everything neglected in her own house:—

19 She has thrown out her hands in spinning; | **19** She layeth her hands to the spindle,
and her hands have held the spindle. | and her hands hold the distaff.

"**Thrown out;**" referring to the rude "**spinning**" of an ancient date, in which the hand was "*thrown out*" in drawing the thread. Perhaps not unintentionally the same words are used in the next verse to represent the "**[holding] out [of] her hands to the afflicted.**" She is good, but not good at the expense of duty. Her charity begins at home. She works busily at "*spinning*," and then goes out to "**[open] her palm to the afflicted**":—

20 She has opened her palm to the afflicted, | **20** She stretcheth out
and held out her hands to the needy. | her hand to the poor;
yea, she reacheth forth
her hands to the needy

Nor is she blind to the command,—“Thou shalt love thy *neighbor*.” She works naturally. She follows the sense of Christ's homiletic, “Go not from house to house” (Luke 10:7). She squanders not her service by scattering her work unpromisingly; but *begins at Jerusalem* (Lu. 24:47; Rom. 1:16). She provides for her children first; doing good to all men, but understanding the sense of the Apostle, where he says, “specially to them who are of the **household** of faith”:—

- 21** She is not afraid of snow for her house-²¹ | **21** She is not afraid
hold; of the snow for her
for all her household have been clothed in household: for all her
crimsons. household *are* clothed
with scarlet.

“Snow.” “She is not afraid” of the chilling winter of the soul. She not only shuts it out; but secures for all she loves glory as well as safety. “Crimsons;” from a verb meaning, to *shine*; colors, both priestly and royal. She not only sees that her saints appear saintly; but that they be clothed royally, no less than sacerdotally, as both safe and sovereign heritors.

Moreover, as a church, and in the individual believer, she sets great store by appearing reputably :—

- 22** She has made for herself coverlets: ²² | **22** She maketh her-
cotton and purple are her clothing. self coverings of tapes-
try; her clothing is
silk and purple.

She does not despise comfort even for herself. “Cotton;” the ancient *byssus*; something more rich, or more rare, at least, than the textile of our day.

Her grand aim at ornament is to ornament “her Husband.” In that she is His sole beauty. Christ is not “known” but through the Church. All comes down to her from Him: but, like the moon, she is the Sun’s beauty through the night. What would be heard of Christ but through the Church? And “in the gates;” yea, in the very court of Heaven; His commerce with the Church is that which has ennobled the face of the Redeemer (Ps. 19:5; Is. 53:11; Jo. 3:29; Rev. 4:9-11):—

- 23** Her husband has become known in the ²³ | **23** Her husband is
gates, known in the gates,
in sitting with the elders of the land. when he sitteth among
the elders of the land.

She does all sorts of good; and benefits the world even with less things than her royal raiment :—

- 24** She has made under-linen, and sold it; ²⁴ | **24** She maketh fine
and delivered girdles to the Canaanite. linen, and selleth it;
and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.

The savage tribes that pick up fragments of our dress, may represent the heathen that begin the crude lessons of redemp-

tion. “*Girdles*,” in Paul (Ephes. 6:14) the foundation of the “whole armour.” “*To the Canaanite*:” the English Version says, “*to the merchant*.” So says Gesenius. Doubtless the *Canaanites* did become the traffickers (Job. 41:6; Is. 23:8; Hos. 12:7); and “*merchant*” is not an incorrect translation. But the Septuagint retains “*Canaanites*;” and with the requisite historical key, this seems the more striking rendering. The church sheds light even in her trade; and the beginnings of evangelized dress she carries with her in her worldly intercourse among men. “*Girdles* ;” literally, “*girdle*.” The singular we read *collectively*.

Imparting, however, she does not lose. Giving doth not impoverish her. These Proverbs to a large degree oscillate from one extreme point to another. Going out with all her purity among the corrupted *Canaanites*, she does not become herself impure. On the contrary, she has a principle of defence. “*She laughs at*” any exposure either of wealth or person:—

- 25 Strength and beauty are her clothing; and she laughs at the day that is yet to come. | ²⁵ Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.

“*Strength and beauty*.” How godlike that is! Man’s works separate these two traits in all that he creates. The stately palace! We could knock tons off, and its strength remain. But there are no heavy cornices in the works of the Creator. “*Strength and beauty*” lie endlessly together. So in the new creation. In eternal blessedness the “*strength*” that “*laughs*” at the future will be numerically one with the “*beauty*” that adorns the ages.

Her great work will be to give light. Preaching is her highest errand. Promulgating truth is what she is most made for in the creation. And yet this is allied with the homeliest drudgeries of her labor:—

- 26 She has opened her mouth with wisdom; and kind direction is upon her tongue. | ²⁶ She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.
 27 She has looked well to the ways of her house; and eats not the bread of idleness. | ²⁷ She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

Four verses speak of her “**praise**” for all this. First (v. 28), the very life of her sons *praises* her. What is the church but her sons? The Hebrew is peculiar. They rise “**and**” praise her. The meaning is, they praise her by their very *rise*. Most mightily her Greatest Son (Rev. 12:5) “**gives praise to her**.” The greatest birth of the church is her Son and King; “**her Husband**,” in the figure of the text. And, therefore, in the emphatic Hebrew,—

- 28** Her children have risen up to bless her. | **28** Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.

She is a wonderful creature: a superb, bewildering mystery. Isaiah announces (Is. 61:7*) that she is the Second Creature in the universe. If Christ be part of her, as He is, in His Human Nature, she is then the First Creature. Many Intelligences have been high; but she, higher. For listen to the text that follows!—

- 29** Many daughters have done ably; | **29** Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou hast gone up above them all. | but thou excelest them all.

“**Above them all**,” in holiness:—

- 30** Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain; | **30** Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; a woman that fears Jehovah, in that shall | but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall praise herself. | be praised.

The Church, to be the grandest creature of the Most High, must be the holiest. With Christ as Head, that is the hope. “In the ages to come the exceeding riches of His grace” are —how? Why, “in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:7). To be very kind, He must make us holy. That we be very holy, is His only “kindness.” “**Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain.**” That is, splendors of grand life are nothing, though it be in the courts of God. The “**Woman that fears Jehovah**,” is the splendid Church, through infinite ages of redemption.

There is indeed a “**gain of [hand]**,” as well as a grace of heart; but even that is largely this grace itself. The most solid

*Not “**double**” (E. V.), but “**the second place**” (see 2 Kings 23:4).

wage of goodness will be intrinsically the being good. “Give” this to the Church. “In the gates;” i. e., when transferred to the realm of Heaven; among her Great Ones, when assembled in her Courts: let her chief wealth be her purity:—

- 3¹) Give her of the gain of her hands; | 3¹ Give her of the
and let her works praise her in the gates. | fruit of her hands;
and let her own works
praise her in the gates.

III.
ORIGINAL EXPOSITIONS
CLASSIFIED.

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SOME OF THE ORIGINAL EXPOSITIONS

RE-EXAMINED

IN A

CLASSIFIED LIST.

THE expositions in the following list are absolutely original. They are, therefore, without authority, and subject to the prejudice of all versions, and all previous students of the Bible. The writer's own prejudices were felt as against his own work, when he saw so many novelties springing up in so short a book, in a field so thoroughly tilled, and after laborers so much better informed, and with so many more of the auxiliaries of cognate speech. He has, therefore, needed, himself, the encouragement which this classification gives. It allows his readings mutual support. He has left out many not capable of a kindred grouping. Those which he inserts, in number over three hundred, seem all to be encouraged by the following facts:—first, they agree with confessed idioms of the English; second, they agree with confessed readings of other Hebrew; third, some of them with confessed classical and New Testament Greek; and fourth, all of them with the context, in ways to relieve jumbled and incomprehensible connections, or to redeem the passage from hopeless and most improbable commonplace. In this new edition he admits no doubt such as he might have leaned to fifteen years ago. In all his Hebrew studies, and in all his thought of Ecclesiastes, the Jewish preacher; by his reverence for the word, and by all the support of the cognate and connected texts, he is no longer in a mood to dream that any gnomes are secular, but specially to insist that all are gospel.

CLASS I.

UNNOTICED CONCLUSIONS

AFTER AN INFINITIVE WITH LAMEDH.

1.—CHAP. i:2, 3.

- 2 To know wisdom and admonition ;
to put a distinct meaning into discriminated speeches ;
- 3 to accept clear sighted admonition,
is righteousness and judgment and right behaviour.
- 2 To know wisdom and instruction ; to perceive the words of understanding ;
- 3 To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity ;

We say in English,—“ *To falter is death.*” We read in the New Testament,—“ Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, —To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world,” Jas. i:27. This Greek is inverted ; but read reversely, it matches our case at once. “ To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, is pure religion and undefiled.” The old interpretation in this case, and the versions into every language, have been a perfect jumble of discordant introduction.

II.—CHAP. i: 4, 5.

- 4 In order to give subtlety to the simple; to the child knowledge and thorough thought; 4 To give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.
- 5 The wise man will hear, and increasingly acquire; and a man already become discerning, will gain in capability to guide. 5 A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:

We say in English, '*To reap we must sow.*' This is different from the last, but still it is a conclusion preceded by the preposition '*to*' (or *lamedh*). In this very Book (E. V.) Prov. 22: 19, we read,—"That thy trust may be in the Lord, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee": literally,—"To be (or that there be) in Jehovah thy ground of trust, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee." Our Old Version, therefore, has essentially the same forms; and, of course, it would be a shame to stand back from their use, where it throws new order into a whole connection.

III.—CHAP. i: 6, 7.

- 6 For putting a distinct meaning into a proverb or an enigma; into the words of the wise and their intricate things; 6 To understand a proverb, and the interpretation: the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.
- 7 the fear of Jehovah is the main knowledge; a wisdom and a discipline that fools despise. 7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

The first case (vs. 2 and 3) means that knowledge is holiness; the second (4, 5), that, to impart knowledge, we must increase it in ourselves; and this third, that to find knowledge in books, we must possess it, if it be of a spiritual kind. All three are grand Proverbs for the opening of this spiritual work.

IV.—CHAP. ii: 8.

- 8 To keep watch over the paths of judgment He must also guard the way of His saints. 8 He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.

V.—CHAP. v: 2.

- 2 To guard deep counsels and knowledge, let them mount guard over thy lips. 2 That thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge.

These cases correspond in character very closely. It is strange that such simple renderings have not been thought of; for, to maintain the usual ones, great dislocation has occurred; the infinitive has been merged into a Kal; all purpose for *lamedh* has been denied; and, to maintain such great anomalies, each of these passages has been quoted to sustain the rest; giving us, it may be well here to say, a good suggestive impulse toward that very arrangement into Classes, which ought to be much more efficient to support the grammar, than it can possibly be to excuse and violate it. These passages are both beautiful. One means, that God has a path of judgment; that He has one in which He walks of strict verdict or justice toward every creature; that He has one toward Satan, for example, in which He shall walk eternally, never bending a hand-breadth from strict award; that He has one toward every saint; that to keep that He must watch it eternally; and that, "To keep watch over the paths of

judgment, He must [therefore] also guard the way of His saints." The other means, that "to guard knowledge" we must give it work to do; and that, as the tongue is the most illusive of all the enemies to peace, to watch that is the best practice one can get. "*To guard deep counsels and knowledge, let them mount guard over thy lips.*"

VI.—CHAP. ii : 12-15.

- 12 To deliver thee from the way of evil,
from the man that utters upturning things,
- 13 those that forsake level paths
to go in the ways of darkness,
- 14 who rejoice to do evil,
exult in the upturnings of evil;
- 15 who are crooked in their own paths,
and turned off of their own tracks.

12 To deliver thee from the way of the evil *man*, from the man that speaketh froward things;

13 Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness:

14 Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked;

15 Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths:

VII.—CHAP. ii : 16, 17.

- 16 To deliver thee from the strange woman,
from the stranger that flatters with her
speeches,
- 17 she who forsakes the guide of her youth,
has also forgotten the covenant of her God.

16 To deliver thee from the strange woman, *even* from the stranger which flattereth with her words:

17 Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God.

The idea of both of these passages is, that men are to be warned from lost ways by the extremities to which they lead. This is a fresh and firm sense. All others are feeble. Moreover these distinctly appropriate the grammar. They fit it like a glove. If *var* be absent, or there be a participle, or there be a *Kal* after a participle, all is accounted for. The last shred of peculiarity is woven in; and something is made in the tapestry of all the threads that are present in the text. Of course such fidelities should be admitted as having rights.

CLASS II.

UNNOTICED CONCLUSIONS AFTER A PARTICIPLE.

We say in English, '*Betraying the government, we forfeit all right to protection from it!*' We might expect the like in other languages; and we actually find it in the Hebrew: in Prov. 7:8,—"Passing through the street near her corner; and he (better, he also) went the way to her house," (E. V.); in Prov. 28:27,—"He that giveth (literally, giving) unto the poor, shall not lack; but he that hideth (literally, hiding), his eyes shall have many a curse" (E. V.); again in Prov. 29:14,—"The king that faithfully judgeth (literally, judging) the poor, his throne shall be established forever." (See also 19:16; 29:14). Why, therefore, in cases like the following, where the sense is robbed on account of the refusal, is not the force of the participle, as a matter of course, allowed to it?—

I.—CHAP. vi : 12-15.

- 12 A worthless man; a man utterly in vain;
walking in crookedness of mouth;
- 13 talking with his eyes; speaking with his feet;
motioning with his fingers;

12 A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth,

13 He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers;

- 14** with upturnings in his heart ; fabricating evil,— will be putting forth grounds of quarrel all the time.
- 15** Wherefore his crushing shall come suddenly ; at a stroke shall he be broken, and there be no remedy.
- 14** Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually ; he soweth discord.
- 15** Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly ; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy.

The meaning is, that the "worthless man," who is the "sluggard" of the previous texts ; though he might claim to be inoffensive ; yet, "talking with his eyes, etc., " "motioning with his very fingers," and (therefore) "fabricating evil" even unconsciously ; instead of being inoffensive ; "will be putting forth grounds of quarrel all the time." In New Testament speech,— "He that is not with me is against me" (Matt. 12: 30) ; and, "because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3: 16). Mark how smoothly the Hebrew lies under all these renderings.

- II.—CHAP. xi: 18, 19.**
- 18** A wicked man doing a deceiving work, and he who sows righteousness having a true reward,
- 19** thus righteousness is unto life, but he that chases evil does so to his death.
- 18** The wicked worketh a deceitful work : but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward.
- 19** As righteousness tendeth to life ; so he that pursueth evil, pursueth it to his own death.

This gives rest to a much vexed and fretted passage. It explains the participles ; brings both troubled Proverbs into one ; and gives a meaning to יְהֵי ("thus") which the bickerings of commentators have greatly thrown in question.

- III.—CHAP. xvi: 27, 29.**
- 27** A worthless man, digging up evil, and having upon his lips as it were burning fire,
- 29** as a man of violence, seduces his neighbor, and leads him in a way not good.
- 27** An ungodly man diggeth up evil ; and in his lips there is as a burning fire.
- 29** A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way that is not good.

This case greatly resembles Case First under this Class.

- IV.—CHAP. xv: 10.**
- 10** Discipline is an evil to him who forsakes the path.
- It is in hating reproof he dies.
- 10** Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way ; and he that hateth reproof shall die.

Here the participle and the conclusion are shut into a single clause. But examine the two versions, and see how the common one misses the sense. All previous versions make the two clauses quite distinct (see Class V.) ; in which case the second sinks into a perfect commonplace, but, making the participle the condition of the conclusion, as we have done above, we arrive at deep doctrine. "Discipline" is not "grievous" simply (E. V.), but "an evil." Missing the second clause, our Versionists have also missed the first. "Discipline is an evil to him who forsakes the path" in this very thing. The second clause is actually the key. "Discipline is an evil" ; why ? because the man who will not submit to it, hates it, and because it is in this very act, viz., "in hating reproof," that he grows worse ; which Solomon expresses by saying tropi-

cally, "He dies." The unlimbering of the participle, therefore, to make of it the pivot of the whole verse, has been an unobserved necessity.

Quite similar is the next case:—

V.—CHAP. xviii : 21.

- 21 Death and life are in the hand of the tongue ; | 21 Death and life are in the
and just as they love it each man shall eat | power of the tongue; and
its fruit. | they that love it shall eat the
fruit thereof.

Understood like the English Version, the thought is the commonest possible. Understood like the last, the essence of our life's results, viz., as decided by our love, is most theologically and truthfully pointed out. The participle, therefore, is still the hinging expression.

So is it in the next case, where the same participle "*loving*" is applied to the Almighty:—

VI.—CHAP. xxii : 11.

- 11 The king, loving purity of heart, | 11 He that loveth pureness
has graciousness of his lips as his near com- | of heart, for the grace of his
panion. | lips the king shall be his
friend.

This text will fall also under another class (Class XII).

VII.—CHAP. xxv : 22.

- 22 for, shovelling live coals thyself upon his | 22 For thou shalt heap
head, | coals of fire upon his head,
Jehovah shall punish thee also. | and the Lord shall reward
thee.

This is the startling instance. It has been missed, not only by all the moderns, but by the Septuagint translation. It is quoted from the Septuagint by Paul; who, though he often corrects that text, does not do so in the present case. As in many another instance, he takes their version as it was; and, as it did not teach error, allows its idiom, which had grown fast to the language of the synagogue, to be sealed upon it by the more recent inspiration. The participle, however, occurring just as before, is too indicative of sense to be mistaken; and again, in making that the hinge of the sentence, we have a very perfect figure, instead of having a very awkward one; and we have a verse in every beautiful detail corresponding with every point of the inspired Hebrew.

VIII.—CHAP. xxviii : 2.

- 2 In the sin of a land many are its leaders ; | 2 For the transgression of
but by the plainest man who imparts dis- | a land many are the princes
cernment, getting knowledge, it makes | thereof; but by a man of un-
itself endure. | derstanding and knowledge
the state thereof shall be pro-
longed.

IX.—CHAP. xxix : 7.

- 7 The righteous man taking knowledge of | 7 The righteous consider-
the cause of the weak, | eth the cause of the poor; but
the wicked man makes no attempt to know | the wicked regardeth not to
it. | know it.

X.—CHAP. xxix : 12.

- 12 A ruler, paying close attention to some false | 12 If a ruler hearken to
thing, | lies, all his servants are wicked-
will have altogether, as his ministers, wicked | ed.

For the exposition of these last three texts, see the body of the Commentary.

CLASS III.

UNNOTICED CONCLUSIONS

NOT PRECEDED BY LAMEDH OR A PARTICIPLE.

I.—CHAP. ii : 1-5.

- 1 My son, if thou wilt take my words,
and hide my commandments with thee,
2 so as to point thine ear toward wisdom,
thou shalt incline thine heart toward discernment.
3 But if thou wilt cry after discernment,
and lift up thy voice for understanding ;
4 if thou wilt seek it like money,
and dig for it as for hid places of store ;
5 then shalt thou discern the fear of Jehovah,
and find the knowledge of God.

1 My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee ;
2 So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding ;
3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding ;
4 If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures ;
5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

This is a double proposition. It draws one conclusion in the second clause of the second verse, and thus paves the way for a stronger one in the proposition beginning with the words, "but if" (v. 3). All this has been missed by exegetes. The result has been a very vapid paragraph. But a discovery of that second clause (v. 2) as one to drop down upon as an anterior resting for the sense, makes all a very striking paragraph. If we listen, we shall be moved. The heart is framed that way. And then if, moved, we cry to God, and entreat for final favor, we shall be converted. It is a succinct and literal direction for climbing out of darkness into marvellous light.

II.—CHAP. ii : 18-20.

- 18 Because she has sunk down to death as to her house,
and to the shades as to her paths,
19 none that go in to her return again,
or overtake the paths of life ;
20 for the very purpose that thou mayest walk
in the way of the good,
and keep the paths of the righteous.

18 For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.
19 None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.
20 That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous.

No proposition could be more direct. Impenitence as to her "house," i. e., as to all her interests, has sunk down to death, and to the grave as to her paths ; therefore, there is no hope for her votaries. What interest can be a motive of ascent ? or what path bring any back ?

III.—CHAP. vii : 1.

- 1 My son, watch my words,
and thou shalt store my commandments with thee.

1 My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee.

IV.—CHAP. xxii : 17.

- 17 Incline thine ear and hear the words of the wise,
and thou shalt incline thine heart to my knowledge.

17 Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge.

These cases are simple ; and they resemble and explain each other.

CLASS IV.

UNNOTICED CASES OF TWO OR MORE CLAUSES
RUNNING TOGETHER INTO ONE PROPOSITION.

I.—CHAP. vi: 26.

- 26 For after a woman selling herself as low as
for a loaf of bread,
and she a man's wife,
a precious soul will hunt.
- 26 For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought
to a piece of bread; and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life.

The preposition means, primarily, *about*, or *round about*. *Hunting round* or *about*, would not be a bad expression. But it grew to mean "*for*," or *on account of*, which also makes a good sense. The translation above seems to be a smooth transcript from the Hebrew. Italics, when they occur so heavily as in the Old Version, should always incline us to doubt. The thought is, that Impenitence debauches herself "for a loaf of bread," and that against the highest claims of Another; and yet, that "*for*" such a poor wretched object of contempt "a precious soul will hunt."

II.—CHAP. xii: 16.

- 16 A fool, in the day that he is made to know
his provocation,
also covers over his shame, a wise man.
- 16 A fool's wrath is present-
ly known: but a prudent man
covereth shame.

The key to this sentence is an unnoticed force of Niphal. It has been observed in other passages; and Gesenius distinctly points it out. He quotes Prov. 10: 9, where our Old Version, under the force of the usual Niphal, translates, "*shall be known*." Gesenius reads, "*shall be made to know*." He quotes Jeremiah 31: 19. There, even the Old Version seizes the thought. It reads, "*After I was instructed*," i. e., *after I was made to know*. A thought of this idiosyncracy of the verb *to know*, would have led Gesenius and other commentators to make this also a case of the causative passive. The meaning is, that, where a man repents, he also believes; that, where "*he is made to know his provocation*, he also covers over his shame, a wise man."

III.—CHAP. xvii: 26.

- 26 Even deserved punishment to the righteous
does not seem good
when designed to chasten the willing with a
view to holiness.
- 26 Also to punish the just
is not good, nor to strike
princes for equity.

This is good specimen of the dislocations that a false rendering assumes. In the first place "*even*" has to be gotten rid of. It is therefore softened into "*also*" (E. V.). In the second place *lanedh* occurs before "*the just*" (E. V.); therefore, Gesenius mentions it as belonging after this particular verb; and quotes this verse in proof of it! Thirdly, there is no *and* before the second clause; and, therefore, we are furnished with Italics (E. V.), and "*nor*" assumes the place. Now, all these obstructing and quite inexplicable points come each in place with our simple rendering. The *lanedh* drops from the verb, and attaches needfully to the adjective. "*Even*" is seized upon at once; while "*and*" ought not to be present, because all merges into a single thought: and that, in-

stead of being so tame a one as that to "punish the just is not [a] good [thing]" ! is the very good thought, that punishment comes acceptably to no one—that even to the righteous it does not seem good, even though deserved, and when distinctly announced as intended for his help as a believer.

The next case is scarcely important; but just as strange as the last in never having been noticed :—

IV.—CHAP. XX: 15.

- 15** There actually is gold, and plenty of pearls, and precious vessels in the lips of knowledge. 15 There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.

The cause of its lying hid is, perhaps, that there is no preposition "*in*." But the noun absolute (see Class XIII.) will serve such a text instead. We can translate, "*as to the lips of knowledge*," or "*in the instance of*;" and the meaning will be just as good. "There is gold and plenty of pearls and precious vessels in the instance of the lips of knowledge." In the absence of this throwing all into one, the first clause is a very feeble one; whereas, together, the three nouns parse precisely alike, with no discernible cause why the first two should be made into a separate assertion.

V.—CHAP. XX: 25.

- 25** An act of consecration such that after vows there comes inquiry as a snare has actually swallowed a man in. 25 It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry.

This is a difficult sentence. Our translation has disturbed the clauses, so that we cannot preserve them in the English. The whole Proverb has been much contested. Taking the "*holy thing*," however, or the "*act of consecration*," as the leading noun; and putting "*snare*" in apposition with it,—"*the holy thing as a snare*," then making *vav* consequential, and letting the words that follow it describe one characteristic of the "*act of consecration*"—that it is such that after vows one makes enquiry; and we have the description of a thing which, snare-like, *swallows a man up*. The meaning is, that religious engagements trap a man, if they are so lightly made that, after making them, he enquires and hesitates.

Next come two very signal cases :—

VI.—CHAP. XVI: 2.

- 2** As to all the ways of a man, pure in His own eyes, while yet He weighs out spirits, is Jehovah. 2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes: but the LORD weighteth the spirits.

VII.—CHAP. XXI: 2.

- 2** As to the whole way of a man, right in His own eyes, and weighing out hearts, is Jehovah. 2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.

We have a Class XIII., which includes unnoticed instances of nouns taken absolutely. If it were not for this present class, there is where both these would occur. We might make still another class, of texts thrown both clauses into one, and the whole united proposition ending in the one great nominative of the Proverb. Witness this in a Proverb recently gone over :—"The King, loving purity of heart, has graciousness of his lips as his near companion" (22: 11). In the Hebrew, the great subject comes last. We might translate this way :—"Loving pur-

ity of heart, graciousness of his lips as his near companion is the King." The same resort for the sake of emphasis occurs in both our present cases. "Ways" in one case (16: 2), and "way" in the other (21: 2), are both in the absolute. The meaning is,—As to the ways of a man, right in His own eyes, and weighing out hearts, is Jehovah; that is, "right," though men are wrong, and "right," though He controls them in the wrong (1 Pet. 2: 8), and right, though He "measures out hearts," so as to determine whether they shall be wrong or not. It is a strong apologetic Proverb after naked Calvinistic texts. Our reading, if approved, therefore, is a grand theological pronunciation.

VIII.—CHAP. XXI: 12.

- 12 He who gives wisdom to the righteous man
by means of the house of the wicked,
overturns the wicked by means of evil.
¹² The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked: but God overthrows the wicked for their wickedness.

This will come also under the class of overlooked Hiphils (Class XXII).

CLASS V.

UNNOTICED CASES

OF THE

FLOW OF THE FIRST CLAUSE INTO THE SECOND.

That there is room for great discoveries here, we would prove by a very notable one given by Maurer, if not actually made by him. The Proverb, chap. 10: 29, had before been translated "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright; but destruction *shall be* to the workers of iniquity" (E. V.). Can anything be more tame than this second clause? We may be sure something is wrong in a Proverb when its terse sharp asseverations degenerate into anything so dull as this. The whole is brightened by throwing out the Italics. That lifts the Proverb into our present class; that is, the class of unnoticed cases where the second clause looks back for part of its language to the first. How marvellously this Proverb is changed by simply dropping what does not belong to it! Not, "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright, but destruction *shall be* to the workers of iniquity;" but, The way of the Lord is both "strength" and "destruction." Throw out the "*shall be*," and let the second clause fall back upon the "*is*" of the first: then it will announce a most pregnant apothegm. "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright, but destruction to the workers of iniquity." Now this discovery, enounced by Maurer, is a fine authority for another not hitherto made. The points are promisingly similar. The text is still more beautiful. We give it as our first case:—

I.—CHAP. XXI: 31.

- 31 A horse is made ready against a day of battle;
and salvation against Jehovah.
³¹ The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the Lord.

Throw out from the English Version the Italic "*is*," and repeat the preposition "*against*;" for they are the same in both clauses; and we have every hint for a strangely unnoticed asseveration. The Holy Ghost

has been speaking of our danger. There is no denying it. There is no temporizing with it. "There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord" (v. 30, E. V.). The only way to meet Him is to meet Him armed. "The horse is prepared against the day of battle; but safety (literally, salvation) against the Lord." This is the English Version, with nothing changed but the Italics and the preposition "of."

The next case is more like that of Maurer:—

II.—CHAP. XIV : 7.

- 7 Go from the presence of a stupid man,
and thou shalt not know the lips of knowledge.
7 Go from the presence of
a foolish man, when thou per-
ceivest not in him the lips of
knowledge.

It is wonderful that Maurer did not seize the analogy. He does give a strangely coincident translation. He says, "*I e regione hominis stulti, et non animadvertis labia scientia.*"* But then he spoils all, thus:—"Adi stultum sic ut eum tibi ex adverso habeas, attende eum quantum potes, non cognosces quicquam scientiae a labiis ejus profisci." The meaning of this is,—Confront in the closest way the foolish man, and you will never see any traces of wisdom in his lips. Which (Anglice) means, that a fool is a fool. Whereas our meaning is, the solid and profound averment, that wisdom is to be learned from folly; that is, that Satan mistaught a truth when he spoke of Gods, and of knowing good and evil; that this mystery gave the naming to the tree; that had there never been any sin, there had never been such enlightened holiness; and that, comparatively speaking, just as I'aul means when he says he was not sent to baptize (1 Cor. 1:17), and as Christ means when He says, "They had not had sin" (Jo. 15:22), if we go out of sight of the foolish man, we shall never know the lips of knowledge.

Still more like Maurer's case is a verse in the twenty-first chapter:—

III.—CHAP. XXI : 15.

- 15 The execution of judgment is joy to the righteous,
but ruin to workers of iniquity.
15 It is joy to the just to do
judgment: but destruction
shall be to the workers of in-
iquity.

"*Judgment*," or, to speak in plainer terms, the carrying out of the awards of justice (see Class XLVIII), is the making of the saints, and the ruin of apostate sinners. Our argument here again, in addition to our smooth agreement with the Hebrew, is, the miserable commonplace of the second clause of the approved English Version. Maurer comes very near our version. So do others. Zockler nearly reaches it in his recent commentary. But, while writing, as we have done, the first with the second clause, they mistranslate "*judgment*," making it merely synonymous with *right*, and making it the doing right of man, rather than the carrying out of "*judgment*," whether by man or by his Maker.

IV.—CHAP. X : 13.

- 13 Through the lips of the discerning wisdom
is found;
but a rod for the back of the senseless man.
13 In the lips of him that
hath understanding wisdom
is found; but a rod is for the
back of him that is void of un-
derstanding.

A good prelude for our version would be, to ask the question, what valuable sense the second clause has under the old reading? That surely is a fair argument. If our Sage is Solomon, and Solomon in the curtest proverbs, and the whole under the lead of inspiration, surely more caution

* He attributes this comment to Ludovicus de Dieu.

should have been had against the poorest truisms in so brief a book. The old Proverb would say,—“In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found.” What is the distinct thought learned by scores of such asseverations? But when we are taught, that the same lips carry wisdom in their speeches, and yet, in those very speeches, death and gospel hardness to the impenitent and lost, we have a distinct truth to think of, and in fact a deep theology which the Apostle long after is careful to supply. These pattering of commonplace are fine *indicia* that there must be something deeper thought of to satisfy a sentence.

V.—CHAP. x: 14.

- 14 The wise store away knowledge :
but the mouth of the fool early ruin.

14 Wise men lay up know-
ledge; but the mouth of the
foolish is near destruction.

“Near destruction” (E. V.) is an equivoque. Does it mean “near destruction” in the sense of *speedy*? “near,” therefore, being an adjective? or does it mean *near to destruction*? An unsophisticated reader would suppose the latter. The Hebrew adjective implies the former. So most modern scholars (Maurer, Zockler, etc.) regard it. But they do not detect the holding over of the first verb. “The wise store away knowledge ; but the mouth of the fool (near or) early ruin.”

VI.—CHAP. x: 23.

- 23 As a jest to a fool is the execution of a pur-
pose ;
but it is wisdom to a discerning man.

23 It is as sport to a fool to
do mischief; but a man of un-
derstanding hath wisdom.

Several moderns have seen the flow of this first clause into the second ; but they have sent forward the wrong word. Maurer reads,—“To a fool doing wickedness is sport ; to a man of understanding, wisdom ;” the meaning being, that wickedness is the sport or pleasure of a fool, and wisdom the sport or pleasure of a discerning man. The difficulties of this are two ; first, “sport” is a very ill-chosen word for pleasure ; and, second, “sport” being before “fool” with *tamedh*, and “wisdom” being before “man” with *lamedh*, make an order which ought to throw those substantives just into that relation. Moreover, “do wickedness,” by going a little further back to the root, means to *execute a purpose*. So we have sense and order and a good primary meaning all combined ; and we translate,—“The execution of a purpose is sport to a fool, but wisdom to a discerning man.” This is a grave idea. We beg particular notice of the second clause in the English Version : and challenge emphatically any appreciable force in it.

VII.—CHAP. xiii: 5.

- 5 A deceiving business hates the righteous
man,
but also shames and disgraces the wicked.

5 A righteous man hateth
lying: but a wicked man is
loathsome, and cometh to
shame.

Maurer, after giving the old meaning, seems to turn from the whole thing with a species of disgust. He says Ewald translates “a lying word” into,—“any deceitful matter.” “Si quis preferre voluerit, præferat,” he says, half pettishly. No wonder he shrinks from a text that says “A righteous man hateth lying !” and (as he translates the second clause)—“A wicked man acts badly and basely !” What possible help could come from stacks of such inconceivable plaititudes? Strangely enough, they have been made possible by inverting the first clause, and by casting two Hiphils out of the second. By refraining from doing either, our own much better sense comes in, with all the smoothness of

the Hebrew. "A false thing hates the righteous man," because he stands in its way, and burdens it with rebuke; but it does still worse to the wicked man; for, in the end, it shames him, and fills him with disgrace.

The next is an overlooking of the pregnant force of *vav* (see Class XIX):—

VIII.—CHAP. xiv:22.

- 22** Must they not err that devise evil,
seeing that Mercy and Truth devise good? 22 Do they not err that devise evil? but mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good.

The next shows an unnoticed Hiphil (see Class XXII). It is rarely safe to read (Hiphil) "makes subtle,"—"is prudent." To find the object for the Hiphil, however, we have to invert the last clause, which, nevertheless, is a very usual and very natural measure for coming at the sense:—

IX.—CHAP. xv:5.

- 5** A fool rejects the discipline of his father,
but gives him subtlety who keeps watch 5 A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.

The old method works out the sense (second clause),—"He that regardeth rebuke is prudent." Where is the great force of that, as a Proverb from the King of Men? On the other hand, the thought, that the same fool who rejects the wisest discipline, is a study to him who submits to discipline, and in the end helps him to more subtlety; is a truth that has to do with the very timbers of our state; and accounts more than anything beside for the permission of every evil.

X.—CHAP. xvi:3.

- 3** Roll thy doings in the direction of Jehovah; 3 Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.
and they shall have success according to thy plans.

An unnoticed noun in apposition (see Class XIV.) is the key to this sense. Instead of reading,—"Thy thoughts shall be established" (E. V.), we read,—"They shall be established as thy thoughts." This carries us back to a first clause nominative. It binds the two clauses together. All works are "established" in God's great plan; even those of Satan, or of Nero. But the saint's works are established favorably; i. e., they are established as they were meant; i. e., they are established *as* (or *according to*) our plans.

The next case has been overlooked from that common fault of not giving to בְּ the force of "because" (see Class XLV). There is a double stage of the בְּ. *Because* thou dost watch over wise words within thee, they become pleasant; and *because* they become pleasant, they become fixed together upon thy lips. This is a deep philosophy of heavenly obedience. We never act wrong in heaven, because we are bathed in a sea of blessedness. We are full of love, which is the same thing as finding wise words pleasant. Perfect love incapacitates us from wrong action; for love is the spring of what is right, and perfect love casteth out fear. So then for the case:—

XI.—CHAP. xxii:18.

- 17** Because it is pleasant because thou dost 18 For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee: they shall withhold be fitted in thy lips.
watch over them within thyself;
therefore they shall get fixed together upon thy lips.

We will give but one more:—

XII.—CHAP. XXIV: 28.

- 28 Be not a witness to no purpose against thy neighbor,
and, mayhap, deceive with thy lips.

^{xx} Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause; and deceive not with thy lips.

A little particle at the beginning of the verb to *deceive* has led some to make the second clause an interrogative, but has found most Hebraists ready to neglect it altogether. The English Version has boldly put in the Italic "not." The little particle is really the *gnomon* of the sentence. It gives us a clue to throwing it all into one; and makes a maxim complete as to the matter of private scandal. We are not to witness against our neighbors uselessly (see Class XLVI). This is a full maxim by itself. But then it is enforced by a bye consideration that is expressed by the particle *π*, that ill-speaking is in all cases dangerous at best; and should be in no case resorted to uselessly, because "*mayhap*," that is, it may be that, in the very strongest case, we may be mistaken. We are not to talk censoringly except in the most necessary cases; because, in this horribly distracted world, we are never sure we have the truth. "Be not a witness to no purpose against thy neighbor; and, mayhap, deceive with thy lips."

CLASS VI.

UNNOTICED INDEPENDENCY

OF THE

SECOND CLAUSE.

Just as true readings have been hid by a failure to unite the clauses, so one or two have been lost from sight by a failure to divide them. There are notable instances in Prov. 16:1 and Prov. 18:1; both of which our English Version throws, in their two clauses, together. Rosenmüller, in the instance of the first, and Maurer, in the other, give nearly our own rendering. They both throw the two clauses apart; and by that late discovered method of translation put us on our watch for like cases which they fail to notice.

Such we find in the twentieth chapter:—

I.—CHAP. XX: 11.

- 11 Even by his common doings a child shall make himself known.
Is he pure? is just also this,—Is his work right?

¹¹ Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.

The translation explains everything. But for this distinctness in the second clause, a child's doings would be gravely the test (E. V.) whether his work is right! How would that answer?

Again:—

II.—CHAP. III: 12.

- 12 For whom Jehovah loves He corrects, and, as a father, does the son a favor.

¹² For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

We can almost *feel* the error (E. V.), like the creaking of a mill. "*In whom*" as not in the text, and "*even*," as an unusual translation for "*and*."

make the machinery groan with an appearance of labor. If we take these out, the Hebrew falls smoothly into its place; and the sense shows its original intention. *For whom Jehovah loves He corrects, and favors, as a father does a son.*

We give one other instance:—

III.—CHAP. xxiii: 23.

- 23** Buy the truth, and sell it not.
It is wisdom, and discipline, and discern- | ²³ Buy the truth, and sell
it not; also wisdom, and in-
struction, and understanding.

CLASS VII.

OVERLOOKED CASES

WHERE

SENTENCES SHOULD BE INVERTED.

Inverted sentences occur in English. We say,—'A great king was Frederick.' We mean,—Frederick was a great king. The rules for inversion seem about the same in Hebrew. In fact the rules are singularly indistinct; or else cases that we shall mention, would hardly have been so long unnoticed. The most remarkable that we have to propose, is in the fourteenth chapter. It is a most common sentence:—

I.—CHAP. xiv: 9.

- 9** Sin makes a mock at fools,* | ⁹ Fools make a mock at
but between upright beings there is favor. | sin: but among the righteous
there is favour.

The difficulties of the old rendering are, first, that the numbers disagree: "Fools" is plural, and "make" (E. V.), or *makes*, is singular; and second, that the verb is a wrong one: *Fools make a sport of sin*; but hardly "make a mock" of it. On the other hand, invert the sentence, and everything comes right. The context has been speaking of "the wisdom of the prudent (being) to understand his way." All men have a way; and the great thing in "wisdom" is, that she has made hers discernible. She knows where she is going. Folly, on the other hand, has this quintessential folly, that she allows herself to be wilfully deceived.

"With pain she travails all her days,
"To reap eternal woe."

She goes on to death consciously a dupe: and then the phrase comes in finely,—"Sin makes a mock at fools." "Between upright beings there is favor." That is,—People of good intentions are kind, and mutually truthful. But sin, after deluding us to death, turns and mocks us, deriding the sorrow that she herself originates. The plural noun and singular verb are no longer jarring against each other; but the simple unthought-of step of an inverted text, conciliates the grammar, and greatly appreciates the sense.

Our next case is less simple:—

* Since finishing this book, and while it is going through the press, we have encountered, in reading, a translation nearly like this; but without a statement of its author, and with no comment.

II.—CHAP. XX: 6.

- 6 Much of the mere man one calls his goodness;
but a faithful man, who can find ?
- 6 Most men will proclaim
every one his own goodness;
but a faithful man who can
find?

The English Version finds its nominative in the usual position. We find ours after the verb. What the former translates "many men," is literally "much of man," and answers very well to the phrase "much that is merely human." The verb means to *name* much oftener and more certainly than to "proclaim" (E. V.) or *publish*. And though the English Version is striking in its sense, yet not so much so, perhaps, as the teaching, that piety must be a new principle of life; that much that is merely human men call their goodness, but a true genuine fidelity is a rare thing to be found.

Now one more under this head :—

III.—CHAP. XXVIII : 16.

- 16 A prince, wanting discernment, and of great exactions,
shall prolong the days of them that hate robbery.
16 The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor: but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days.

This might have come under another class (Class IV.), of one proposition made out of the two. But we do not wish to duplicate expositions. Here it is a clear case of unnoticed inversion. "Those that hate robbery" might stand as a singular nominative with the intervention of the idea "each" (see 3:18), but in a less forced way will serve as we have presented it. Moreover, the meaning is very rich. It needs no "is" in the first clause, and no "but" in the second; and, with the treatment of "them that hate," not as a genitive, but as a noun absolute, we have this sterling doctrine,—that all criminals; a prince, for example; while themselves unprincipled, shall effect the good of them that abhor their wickedness.

CLASS VIII.

OVERLOOKED CASES

WHERE

SENTENCES SHOULD NOT BE INVERTED.

These cases are more numerous than the former. They are the cases where the sense would have been reached by reading straight with the words, instead of seeking an inversion. They are cases, therefore, where the right seems to be on the side of our reading. They are cases, however, (not unnatural in exegesis), where the nearest sense is often the most likely to be rejected; that is, where the simplest flow of the language, when the thought is somewhat profound, like objects too near our vision, are less likely to be seen than things farther off. Perhaps it is not a false canon for the exegete, that the forthright flow of the speech is the one to be preferred, unless stronger reasons (as in the last class) invert the sentence.

I.—CHAP. VII : 22.

- 22 starting after her suddenly as an ox enters
to the slaughter,
and as a chain for the punishment of a fool ;
- 22 He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks.

We shall resume this case under the head of Unnoticed Emblems (Class LI.). Suffice it here to observe that our reading lies smooth with the words of the text, and that scholars have deprecated the opposite (Maurer, De Wette), but have not supplied the method to escape.

II.—CHAP. xi : 17.

- 17 He who manages for his own soul is a man | ^{17. The merciful man doeth}
of mercy : ^{good to his own soul: but he}
and he who afflicts his own flesh is cruel. ^{that is cruel troubleth his}
^{own flesh.}

The English Version inverts both clauses. The true version we believe should invert neither. The English Version means, that a cruel man injures himself. The latter version means, that he who injures himself is a cruel man. This latter is the profounder utterance. It is not an unphilosophical thought, that the Hebrew may *imply* both. Its nakedness from expletives may intend that. But still one must have the preference in the reading; and it seems fair to claim it for the one that has the order of the text. The text, without inversion, means that he who is merciful to himself, is merciful to others by all that his own saved soul can do for his fellow men; and he that is cruel to himself, is cruel to his fellow men, by all that his damned soul can do of harm and mischief. It is the rule of MSS., that that reading shall be preferred that is the more difficult. If that rule should apply here, ours would carry the day; for while it has the simpler order, it has the deeper and more noble sense.

The next case is a mixed one. The first clause is inverted by the other versions, and not inverted by ours. The second clause is inverted by ours, and not inverted by the other versions. We may seem partial to our own work; but we aver that this very structure of antithetical Scriptures, not only in this, but in other books, is more common than any other inverted form. The inversion, when it does occur, is more apt for poetical variety, and more emphatic where it ought to be, viz., in the close, when we invert, if anywhere, in the last clause of the antithesis. The Proverb, as will be seen at once, has been noticed separately under another class (Class V.):—

III.—CHAP. xiii : 5.

- 5 A deceiving business hates the righteous | ^{5. A righteous man hateth}
man, ^{lying: but a wicked man is}
but also shames and disgraces the wicked. ^{loathsome, and cometh to}
^{shame.}

The next case is precisely similar: the second clause inverted; the first clause translated as it stands. The English Version might seem to be so also; but the English Version is itself inverted; as will be seen on a closer inspection. "The ransom of a man's life are his riches," means, a man's riches are the ransom of his life. We make the idea quite the reverse of it. The ransom of a man's life is his wealth; and he who hears not rebuke is the poor man. But let us quote as usual:—

IV.—CHAP. xiii : 8.

- 8 The ransom of a man's soul is his wealth ; | ^{8. The ransom of a man's}
and a poor man is he who has not listened | ^{life are his riches: but the}
to rebuke. ^{poor heareth not rebuke.}

How much more interesting is our version than any other. Wealth is the ransom of a man's life in but a slender way; and *the poor not hearing rebuke*, is equivocal, and in neither sense that it can have more likely to be true than otherwise. A good foundation for these comments would be, to entreat the reader to attempt a sense for the old version, that he

may come dispassionately to see the advantages of the new. That a man's wealth is his redemption, is a poor truth; that a man's redemption is his wealth, is a very glorious and eternal one.

The next case is nearly the same:—

V.—CHAP. XIV: 24.

- 24 The crown of the wise is their wealth ;
the folly of the stupid is folly.

²⁴ The crown of the wise *is*
their riches : but the foolish-
ness of fools *is* folly.

That a man's wealth is his crown is a queer maxim for a religious book; but that a man's crown is his wealth, especially when the man is a saint, and when the crown is that which makes all things subject to him, is a splendid proverb; which, once perceived, should be kept ever after in a plain translation. How sad to invert a passage in order to exchange this meaning for that other! *

VI.—CHAP. XVI: 7.

- 7 Because it pleases Jehovah, the ways of a man,
even of His enemies, He sets at peace with
Him.

⁷ When a man's ways please
the LORD, he maketh even his
enemies to be at peace with
him.

We cannot do better than simply to rehearse our rights. First, we have the order; and second, we have the sense. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (E. V.). Take that idea; which, by the way, is not true in a great multiplicity of cases; and compare it with the sense, that when God pleases, He brings even His enemies into relations of peace; and which is more worthy of an inspired teaching? One confuses Scripture, as many of these more laboring versions do. The other is the very message of Christ. It certainly ought to win favor to our version that it draws the Book near to the simplicity of the gospel.

VII.—CHAP. XVI: 11.

- 11 The balance and scales of judgment are Jehovah's;
His work is all the stones of the bag.

¹¹ A just weight and bal-
ance *are* the LORD's; all the
weights of the bag *are* his
work.

Not "all the weights of the bag are his work" (E. V.); but, "his work is all the weights of the bag." The former inverts the Hebrew, and trifles with the sense. The latter takes words as they come, and gives this grand meaning (it is a Proverb against the caviller):—"God hates injustice. How can He be unjust? False weights are an abomination to Him. His work is not only just, but justice itself. That is its very object. How can He do wrong in the order of the universe, when His work is not only generally right, but is the very stones of the bag?"

VIII.—CHAP. XX: 7.

- 7 He that takes his very walks of pleasure in his integrity, is a righteous man.
Blessed are his children after him.

⁷ The just *man* walketh in
his integrity : his children *are*
blessed after him.

There is not very much difference. But the test is put better in the

* We notice, in review, that Maurer approaches very near our sense in his translation. We would, therefore, throw out this version, as not altogether original, from our list of cases, were it not that Maurer fails of the theologic sense of the idea of a crown. He says, "Sapientia continenter sapientum divitiae." Wisdom itself *is* wealth; but that is not the thought of this passage. "The crown of the wise" is not wisdom, but the empire promised to it. The kingship of the wise, like Aladdin's lamp, is good for all riches. No good thing is withheld from the pious.

order in which the Hebrew has it. And as it *is* the order in which the Hebrew has it, it ought to appear worse, to induce us to change it in the English.

IX.—CHAP. XXI : 12.

- 12** He who gives wisdom to the righteous man | **12** The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked: but God overthroweth the wicked for their overthrows the wicked by means of evil.

This might occur under as many as five classes ; (1) under the class of overlooked Hiphils (Class XXII.); (2) under the class of unnoticed sense of *lamedh* (Class XXIV.); (3) under unnoticed instances of verbs not requiring a preposition (Class XXVIII.); (4) under unnoticed cases of the flow of both clauses into one proposition (Class IV.); and (5) under the present class. Let us insert it here, merely for inspection, and to fortify the point that, *prima facie*, there should be the order of the Hebrew. We shall look at it more thoroughly under Class XXII.

X.—CHAP. XXVIII : 11.

- 11** He that is wise in his own eyes is a rich man; but a poor man, who can discriminate, searches him out. | **11** The rich man is wise in his own conceit: but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.

If the Proverb be taken spiritually, and the "rich man" means a Christian, it is not true that he is "wise in his own eyes"; and if the Proverb be secular, it may or may not be true, as the case may happen. But take the order as it stands, and the meaning is complete. He that is wise in his own eyes, is a rich man; that is, he feels rich, and *is* rich in all personal consciousness. That is, a man who in his own eyes has heavenly wisdom, feels gloriously rich. He is the satisfied hypocrite, with glory already in his eye.

Before we dismiss the idea of a strict conformity with the text, let us look at it in other lights beside that of a mere freedom from inversion :—

CLASS IX.

UNNOTICED SIMPLICITY OF LANGUAGE.

I.—CHAP. XIII : 19.

- 19** A desire that has sprung up, is sweet to the soul; but it is abomination to the stupid to turn away from evil. | **19** The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul; but it is abomination to fools to depart from evil.

To make the passive of the verb to *be* mean "accomplished" would be going very far, and, in fact, has hardly any authority but this very Proverb (see Gesenius). The verb to *be* might seem to be *all* passive, and therefore to have no passive *ex distincto*. But the verb to *be*, when expressed, means nearly always to *come to be*, or to *become*; and the passive of this would be, *being come to be*, or *having become*. That is just the "simplicity of language" that we can insist upon in this passage. A "desire accomplished" means a desire gratified and its object reached. But a desire that *has come to be*, means a desire that has arisen; a thing altogether short of a wish "accomplished." Our first impulse, therefore, should be, to go no further than the language warrants; and, measuring that, we

are rewarded for just such simplicity by stumbling at once upon the proper sense. A desire that has *sprung up*, is so sweet, that it seems death to resist it. Sin is such a desire. And, therefore, it is abomination to fools to depart from iniquity.

II.—CHAP. XVI: 31.

- 31 Grey hair, to be a crown of glory,
must be found in the way of righteousness. | ³¹ The hoary head is a
crown of glory, if it be found
in the way of righteousness.

We cannot declare ours to be so very much more simple than the English Version; but if Solomon meant "if," why did he not say so, instead of leaving it to be inferred? and if, on the contrary, he meant with us, how could he express that, and use, tersely, and in a dense way, any very different reasonings? These are studied texts. That argument is a good one. Omissions of what could be tastefully supplied, are arguments against an interpretation. And if the antagonist one is simply close-hauled and curt, that is no argument against it, if there can be enounced no kindred omission. The English Version cannot translate without Italics. We can; as for example,—"A crown of glory in the shape of grey hairs must be found in the way of righteousness." "In the shape of" is a warrantable prefix for nouns in apposition.

III.—CHAP. XXIII: 28.

- 28 Yea, she herself, like *loot*, lies temptingly;
and increases the robbers among men. | ²⁸ She also lieth in wait as
for a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men.

Notice again the flinching from simplicity. The English Version will put in the italic "for." Why did not Solomon put it in? Maurer brings the verse nearer to the sense by leaving out "for," but making "prey" stand (poetice) for *him who takes prey*, i. e., *the robber*. But here again simplicity has a needless sacrifice. The sense lies just as the Great King wrote it; not "she also lieth in wait as for a prey" (E. V.), nor "she also lieth in wait as a robber" (Maurer), but (far more rich in sense) lieth in wait as prey, just as the word was written. She "lies temptingly" in wait, like plunder, or "loot;" and thus "increases the robbers among men." The first clause is brightened, as looked at by itself; but infinitely more invigorated in alliance with the second.

IV.—CHAP. XXVI: 26.

- 26 Hatred covers with a deceit
the evil of which shall be laid bare in the | ²⁶ Whose hatred is covered
great assembly. | by deceit, his wickedness
shall be showed before the
whole congregation.

It is simpler to find the object of a pronoun in a text, than to invent one, or make it impersonal. The masculine, "*deceit*," has been overlooked by commentators as furnishing just the reference for the pronoun in the second clause. The thought is an immense gainer. That a man who cloaks his hatred under deceit, shall one day be uncovered in the Great Assembly, is but a plain idea. But that hatred is covered with deceit; i. e., hid in its enormity, and unknown to its very self; and that deceit shall end, and the wickedness of that deceit be laid bare in the Great Assembly, is an imposing truth. Not only is the hatred wicked; but the deceit that hides that fact is also wicked. It is not speaking of the wilful hypocrite being unmasked at Judgment, but of the poor dupe being arraigned for the duping. Our very mistakes are wicked. This is profound doctrine. And it is another instance of the plain Hebrew stumbled over at our very feet to seize upon that which is both dull and difficult.

V.—CHAP. xxvii:9.

- 9 Oil and incense delight the heart,
and sweetness its friend, from the dictate of appetite.

Ointment and perfume
rejoice the heart; so doth the
sweetness of a man's friend
by hearty counsel.

This is another instance (see 16: 2; 21: 2) of emphatic words, bearing upon both clauses, being placed at the close of the verse. The meaning is,—As ointment and perfume rejoice the heart from the dictate of appetite, so does sweetness its fellow from the dictate of appetite also. In other particulars this proverb is like the one last treated (26: 26). In the English Version the pronoun seeks its object by calling in the impersonal "man." In our version we find the object close by in the sentence. "Oil and incense delight the heart; and sweetness its friend." "Sweetness" agrees in number and gender with the pronoun. "Oil and incense delight the heart" naturally, i. e., "from the dictate of appetite;" so "sweetness, its friend," that is, the being that possesses "sweetness" of the same nature; so holiness for example, its mate, i. e., the being that possesses holiness; and both by the natural impulse; that is, by "the dictate of appetite." Simplicity of translation, therefore, is that which guides us here, if this be indeed the genuine intent.

VI.—CHAP. xxix:9.

- 29 A wise man has been in conflict with the foolish man;
and there has been commotion and derision, but no rest.

If a wise man contendeth
with a foolish man, whether
he rage or laugh, there is no
rest.

Here, again, scholars destroy the sense by adding to the sentence. Why did not Solomon say,—“if”? The idea is not contingent. The wise man does contend with the foolish man. This is his very nature. “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own” (Jo. 15: 19). “I am come to set a man at variance against his father” (Matt. 10: 35). The very intention of the Proverb is destroyed by the interpolation of that word,—“if.”

So, in the next case. Not the contingent “if,” but a too artful interpretation of the predicate, utterly covers up the sense. The verb means to cause to go out, or to utter forth in any way, either by acts or speeches. The English Version says “uttereth.” The influence is, that the reader simply takes the sentence as meaning that the fool is garrulous. Whereas as the grand doctrine proclaimed by Solomon regards all sanctification. The fool gives loose to all his spirit. The wise man denies and subdues his. The saint is a rower. He carries his boat upward by vigorous strokes. The sinner floats with the stream. Notice how this doctrine is reached. The English Version hits the far narrower sense by departing from the simplicity of the meanings. Our version stays by the words and therein we are conveyed to a broader and profounder signification:—

VII.—CHAP. xxix:11.

- 11 A fool acts forth all his spirit;
but a wise man subdues it back.

A fool uttereth all his
mind; but a wise man keep-
eth it in till afterwards.

So in the next case. What confusion is introduced by introducing the word “lay.” Why did not Solomon say, “lay”? The artistic renderings which swerve from the plain text, give us a verse like this,—“If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth.” Compare it now with a reading that takes the text literally:—

VIII.—CHAP. XXXI : 32.

- 32 If thou hast been withered down, by lifting | 32 If thou hast done fool-
thyself up, | ishly in lifting up thyself, or
and if thou hast been meditating with a hand | if thou hast thought evil, lay
upon the mouth, | thine hand upon thy mouth.

There is evolved thus a preface for the text that follows; a text that we are yet to reach (Class LIV.); requiring just such a key to translate to us its peculiar emblem.

Again the next case. The usual version complicates the Hebrew to simplify the sense. We simplify the Hebrew, or take it strictly as it is, and then look about for its intention; and what is the result? Instead of a simple warning to a prince to avoid that which is destructive to his class, it is ready with its Messianic light to go much further. Let us lay the two together:—

IX.—CHAP. XXXI : 3.

- 3 Give not thy strength to women ; | 3 Give not thy strength
or thy ways so as to destroy kings. | unto women, nor thy ways to
that which destroyeth kings.

Christ was a progenitor of Kings. The warning is, not simply not to destroy Himself, but not to destroy His race; not so to break down in His obedience as to destroy the line that were to trace back to Him as their royal Head.

X.—CHAP. XXXI : 30.

- 30 Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain ; | 30 Favour is deceitful, and
a woman that fears Jehovah, in that shall | beauty is vain ; but a woman
praise herself. | that feareth the LORD, she
shall be praised.

This is a slighter case. Certain it is, however, that the verb is *Hiith-pahel*, and that the Versionists have not noticed it. Everything is to praise her: her own works (v. 31); the inspired author of the Proverbs (v. 29); by implication, therefore, her God; her children (v. 28); and her husband (v. 28). It is, therefore, not without point that she is introduced as praising herself; and that, not on account of beauty, or of grace, or of outward gifts, but only as Paul praised himself (2 Cor. II : 5), for the measure of "fear" that he had for the Almighty.

CLASS X.

UNNOTICED FORCE

OF THE

EXPRESSED PRONOUN.

In Hebrew, the form of the verb, or other features of the sentence, may imply the pronoun, without the need of its being expressed. In those circumstances, when it is actually expressed, it is intended to be emphatic. And this emphatic, because expressed, pronoun, in circumstances where it does not need to be expressed, is one of the clues that has often passed unnoticed:—

I.—CHAP. I : 22.

- 22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, | 22 How long, ye simple
and scorners in their own case delight in | ones, will ye love simplicity?
scorning, | and the scorner delight in
and fools hate knowledge?

Here the pronoun is something more than expressed. It is armed with a preposition ; and is placed after the verb. Its sense is very distinctive. It implies that scorners delight in scorning, not when they see it in others ; for almost all impenitents deplore impenitence when they see it in other men : but when they cherish it in themselves. The English Version, as will be seen, brings out no such intention of the pronoun.

III.—CHAP. i : 26.

- 26 even I, in the midst of your destruction, will | 26 I also will laugh at your
laugh ; calamity ; I will mock when
I will mock when your fear cometh ;

The wonder is, that such a character as Wisdom should "laugh" at anything so solemn as the death of the wicked. The pronoun, therefore, is meant to express this. "Even I;" from whom any such thing could be so little expected. It is meant to show the terribleness, and the utter wilfulness, and the abominable wickedness, of this neglect of our redemption.

III.—CHAP. iii : 18.

- 18 In her very self she is a tree of life to them | 18 She is a tree of life to
that lay hold upon her ; them that lay hold upon her ;
and each is led straight of them that have and happy is every one that
her by the hand. retaineth her.

IV.—CHAP. iv : 13.

- 13 Take fast hold of discipline. Do not let go. | 13 Take fast hold of instruc-
Keep watch over her ; for she is herself thy tion ; let her not go : keep
life. her ; for she is thy life.

V.—CHAP. x : 22.

- 22 The blessing of Jehovah that itself makes | 22 The blessing of the
wealth ; Lord, it maketh rich, and he
and He adds no sorrow with it. addeth no sorrow with it.

VI.—CHAP. x : 24.

- 24 What the wicked man dreads comes of its | 24 The fear of the wicked,
own nature upon him ; it shall come upon him : but
and a desire of righteous men shall he gra- the desire of the righteous
tify. shall be granted.

These cases are all alike. In the first of them our English Version makes wisdom a tree of life. The pronoun carries the idea further. She is "herself" a tree of life. The idea is more beautiful in the next case (4 : 13). Not, "she is thy life" (E. V.) ; but "she is *herself* thy life" ; that is, in the ages to come, wisdom "*herself*" is to be the life of the true believer.

The next cases are personal, and refer to actual beings, and not to character :—

VII.—CHAP. v : 23.

- 23 In his very self he dies for lack of discip- | 23 He shall die without in-
line ; striction ; and in the greatness
and by the greatness of his folly is he made astrey.

VIII.—CHAP. x : 18.

- 18 He that hides hatred with lying lips | 18 He that hideth hatred
but puts forth slander, is himself the fool. with lying lips, and he that
uttereth a slander, is a fool.

IX.—CHAP. xi : 28.

- 28** He that trusts in his riches shall fall him-self ; but like a leaf shall the righteous put forth.

28 He that trusteth in his riches shall fall ; but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

X.—CHAP. xxiii : 3.

- 3** Long not after His dainty meats ; while He is Himself deceitful food.

3 Be not desirous of his dainties ; for they *are* deceitful meat.

XI.—CHAP. xxiii : 14.

- 14** Thyself beat him with a rod, and thou shalt snatch his soul from Sheol.

14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.

XII.—CHAP. xxvi : 4.

- 4** Answer not a fool according to his folly ; lest thou be like him, even thou thyself.

4 Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him.

The second of the above cases (10 : 18) will be a type of all of them. The man who has attempted to make a fool of others, is *himself* the fool. He who hides hatred under flattering lips, and goes about circulating slanders, need not laugh at his poor victim as the dupe. He is himself the dupe. So in another case (11 : 28). He that is leaning on his wealth, may have a dependence that may never fail him. He may die with his money in his pocket. The pronoun, therefore, is a very essential emphasis. The money may stand up well enough, and has stood in English families a thousand years. But *himself* ! there is the question. What becomes of *himself*? All that is solemn in the text is lost in the English Version. "He that trusteth in his riches [*himself*] shall fall." In the next case (23 : 3) the Almighty is the one alluded to. It will be considered under another class (Class LVII.). Be not desirous of His dainties, for He is *Himself* deceitful meat.

The next cases are those in which *himself* is almost too brief a rendering ; where the character, rather than the actual person of the subject, is referred to by the pronoun ; and where "as such," or "as so doing," or "as so being," are the heretofore unnoticed, and, in view of the character of the text, the very proper translation of the pronoun :—

XIII.—CHAP. xix : 1.

- 1** Better is a poor man walking in his integrity, than he that is crooked in his speech, and as such a fool.

1 Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.

XIV.—CHAP. xxi : 13.

- 13** He who shuts his ear from the cry of the weak ; even, because so doing, shall himself also call, and shall not be answered.

13 Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.

XV.—CHAP. xxii : 9.

- 9** The bountiful eye, in its very self, is blessed ; because it has given away its own food to the faint.

9 He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed ; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

XVI.—CHAP. xxviii : 26.

- 26** He that trusts in his own heart, as so doing is a fool ; though he that walks in wisdom, as so doing is dovered.

26 He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool ; but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

It is better to say (19:1),—"He that is perverse in his lips, and, as such, a fool," than, "he that is perverse in his lips, and himself a fool." So (22:9), "The bountiful eye, as such, shall be blessed," is better than, "The bountiful eye itself shall be blessed": the meaning of the former being that it is blessed to have a bountiful eye in itself considered. This emphasis will be of special moment in unravelling other unnoticed Scriptures.

One other case remains, not belonging to either of the previous groups:—

XVII.—CHAP. xxiv : 32.

32 And I looked for my own sake; I applied | ³² Then I saw, *and considered it well*; I looked upon | *it, and received instruction.*
my heart; I saw; I received correction.

"I, even I myself;" or "I, even I for myself." I was not gazing out of conceit or conscious impression of my own fidelity, but out of misgiving, as though the vineyard were my own. The נָכְנָה is most dexterously thrown in; and it will be by a watchful observance of these smaller elements, that many of the confusions of the Hebrew will be ultimately relieved.

CLASS XI.

OVERLOOKED PRONOMINAL SUFFIXES.

The first case is palpable:—

I.—CHAP. viii : 35.

35 for he that finds me has found me life, | ³⁵ For whoso findeth me
and is bringing out favor from Jehovah. | findeth life, and shall obtain
favour of the Lord.

Here, taking the *textus receptus*, there has been a positive omission. Why the pronominal suffix has never been thought of, we cannot imagine. The sense is visibly improved. "Whoso findeth me, findeth *me* life," i. e., as appeared under a recent head (4:13), Wisdom *Herself* is the great life of the believer.

Other instances under this class have been set right by other expositors. See Maurer in Chap. 23:20. We have ourselves discovered an omitted suffix in Ps. 113. The yodh paragogic that has been talked of by grammarians, is here, we have small doubt, a most important suffix. That, however, in some future exposition.

CLASS XII.

OVERLOOKED INTENTION

OF THE

PRONOMINAL SUFFIX.

The pronominal suffix has one constant ambiguity,—that we are not able, except by the sense, to determine whether it should be used reflexively, or otherwise. If the .ithpael were always used for the re-

flexive sense, we would have the pronominal suffix clear for the other reference. But the Hithpael is rarely used at all; and the English Version often regards the suffix as used in a reflexive sense. The difficulty is, that there seems to be no rule for using it this way; and the suffix is conceived either reflexively, or otherwise, without the evidence that existing versions have given fair thought to the other direction of the pronoun. This class, therefore, will divide into two groups; one, where existing versions have understood reflexively what gives a better meaning when read otherwise; and the other, just vice versa, where they have overlooked a reflexive sense, and taken for granted an aspect in the other direction. We will class all under these two groups:—

I.—CHAP. ix : 7.

- 7 He that disciplines a scorner brings down upon him shame;
and he that reproves a wicked man his disgrace.
- 7 He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame; and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot.

II.—CHAP. xiv : 2.

- 2 He that walks in His level track fears Jehovah;
but he that is turned out of His way despises Him.
- 2 He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord: but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.

III.—CHAP. xiv : 14.

- 14 The backslider in heart shall be satisfied with his ways;
and the good man from him.
- 14 The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways; and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.

IV.—CHAP. xvi : 26.

- 26 The laboring soul labors for it;
for its mouth imposes it upon him.
- 26 He that laboureth, laboureth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him.

The first (9 : 7), as read in our Bibles, has that most glaring deficiency, a want of truth. The rebuking of scorners is the common work of the most honored ministries. But that the rebuking of scorners makes them worse, and heaps upon them shame and infamy, is an important doctrine. So in the second case (14 : 2), it is not *his own* "uprightness" (E. V.), but Jehovah's uprightness, that a man is to walk in; it is crookedness in Jehovah's ways that is marked in the second clause as making us despise Him. So, in the third case, it is not from "himself" (E. V.) that the good man is to be satisfied; but from "him," that is, from the "backslider in heart." The good man is to be fed by the bad man in most important contributions of blessing. In the last case (16 : 26), the reflexive is again a mischief. He that laboureth, laboureth for *it*; for *its* mouth craveth it of him. The suffix points back to "death" (v. 25). This is in agreement with another Scripture (Ec. 6 : 6, 7). In that, as well as in this, the finer meaning is lost by the same error of the suffix.

V.—CHAP. xiv : 10.

- 10 A knowing heart is a bitterness to itself;
but with its joy it does not hold intercourse as an enemy.
- 10 The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.

VI.—CHAP. xxi : 20.

- 20 Treasure to be desired, and oil, are in the lodging-place of the wise man;
but a fool of a man devours himself
- 20 There is treasure to be desired, and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.

Here, as we explained above, the error is just the opposite. Translators have seemed to lose the very thought of a reflexive bearing; and yet, pardonably, perhaps, for the verses are very complex. "The heart knoweth his own bitterness" (E. V.) we have expounded above (see Commentary, 14 : 10) as meaning,—The "knowing heart is a bitterness to itself." Here, the reflexive is very properly selected. But in the second clause the "stranger" is not the nominative, but in apposition at the end (see Class XIV.); and the suffix is still in place as used reflexively. So, in the remaining case (21 : 20), the grand strength of the text depends upon a reflexive suffix. Not, "Treasure is in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man spendeth it up"; but *crescendo*, as is the rôle of Solomon The wise man builds up eternal treasures; the fool man devours even himself.

CLASS XIII.

OVERLOOKED CASES OF NOUNS ABSOLUTE.

To this class belong the two very remarkable passages already considered (Class IV.):—

I.—CHAP. xvi : 2.

- 2 As to all the ways of a man, pure in His own eyes,
while yet He weighs out spirits, is Jehovah. 2 All the ways of a man
are clean in his own eyes.
but the Lord weigheth the
spirits.

II.—CHAP. xxii : 2.

- 2 As to the whole way of a man, right in His own eyes,
and weighing out hearts, is Jehovah. 2 Every way of a man is
right in his own eyes: but
the Lord pondereth the
hearts.

The nouns absolute are "ways," in one case, and "way" in the other. The depth of these sentences has been utterly overlooked. The grammatical recommendation is obvious; as, in the first case (16 : 2), all other versions connect the plural "ways" with the singular "clean;" and that, when the former does not come after the latter (see Green Gr. § 275, I). The common Proverb is not altogether true; this new one is profoundly and particularly so.

III.—CHAP. xxiv : 23.

- 23 Even as to These, for the wise
to be partial in judgment is not good. 23 These things also belong
to the wise. It is not good
to have respect of persons in
judgment.

Here the word taken absolutely is a pronoun. It has been referred to the beginning of a section (E. V.). It refers, in our belief, to certain aspects of God. We consider it under another class (Class LVII.).

IV.—CHAP. xxiv : 31.

- 31 And lo! it was all grown up with nettles;
brambles covered its face;
and the wall, as to its stones, was pulled
down. 31 And, lo, it was all grown
over with thorns, and nettles
had covered the face thereof,
and the stone-wall thereof was
broken down.

The English Version itself employs the absolute in the first clause. "It was all grown over with thorns;" which is a good idiomatic equivalent for "*as to* thorns." The version is both just and beautiful. Why

not also in the second? The thorns and the stones are in the same grammatical relations. Grown up *as to* thorns and pulled down *as to* its stones are to be parsed under the same construction.

So a more precarious instance:—

V.—CHAP. XXVIII: 1.

- 1 As to the wicked man, even when he is not pursuing, the righteous have taken flight. x The wicked flee when no man pursueth : but the righteous are bold as a lion.
but as to the righteous a man may be as confident as a lion.

This case rather needs than gives support. Such is the use of our classification. Stronger cases shed their light on weaker ones. And as the noun absolute has been in some instances unperceived, it lends influence to our rendering, to associate it with more obvious interpretations.

CLASS XIV.

UNNOTICED CASES

OF

NOUNS IN APPosition.

The apposition is sometimes syntactical; i.e., of a noun with a whole member of a sentence. "As the chiefest thing in wisdom, get wisdom." But let us present the whole case:—

I.—CHAP. IV: 7.

- 7 As the height of wisdom get wisdom ; and by means of all thy getting get discernment. 7 Wisdom is the principal thing ; therefore get wisdom : and with all thy getting get understanding.

What a waking up of thought! That "wisdom is the principal thing" (E. V.) is indeed very obvious; and that, with all our getting, we are to get discernment; but how much more grand that in all time the chief wise act was, to get wisdom in the beginning; and that *by means* of all our gettings (not simply as along with them) we are to get discernment. In heaven the grandest day's work in eternity will seem the day we believed; and the good of all our gettings, to be, the bearing that they had to increase discernment. So much, then, for one of the handsomest cases of the noun in apposition.

The next is an apposition with a pronoun:—

II.—CHAP. V: 22.

- 22 His very iniquities trap him, if he be a wicked man : and he is holden by the cords of his sin. 22 His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.

All scholars would, perhaps, parse in the same way; and yet the English Version fails of the point that must have caused the noun to be apposed. "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself," is a sentence that might have been written in Hebrew in other and in less special ways. The naked language is:—"His iniquities" (referring plainly to the "man" who is spoken of in the previous Proverb, v. 21) "shall take him" (or trap him) "as a wicked man" (or, be he a wicked man); the

necessity of this distinction being found in the fact, that, in the previous verse, all men are spoken of. The ways of a man are directly in God's sight; and all his paths He levels down. Now, if he be a wicked man, his iniquities trap him. God levels down his paths; and, if he be a wicked man, he easily gets on in them. That is the point of the distinction. The saint has his way levelled, and the sinner equally his way levelled; but what saves the one, is a trap and ruin to the other. This distinction is utterly concealed by all the other versions.

III.—CHAP. viii : 22.

- 22 Jehovah got possession of me as the first of |
His way; |
before His works of old. |
²² The Lord possessed me
in the beginning of his way
before his works of old.

This will reappear under another class (Class XVI.).

IV.—CHAP. xii : 27.

- 27 One cannot roast laziness as something he |
has taken in the chase: |
but a precious treasure of a man is a diligent |
one. |
²⁷ The slothful *man* roast-
eth not that which he took in
hunting: but the substance
of a diligent man is precious.

The apposition here is of slothfulness with the prey taken in hunting. Our reading is very bold; but to atone for that, is the grammar, which is without a flaw, and the difficulties of the baldest sort in any version that may oppose it. An abstract may stand for a concrete; as slothfulness for the sluggard (E. V.); but hardly with quite the wrong gender, and never with no sense. The subject is the intrinsic excellence of piety. Under the form of slothfulness you cannot roast sin as you would venison; but, the indication is, you can roast diligence. The diligent man, himself, is an unfailing treasure.

V.—CHAP. xiv : 10.

- 10 A knowing heart is a bitterness to itself; |
but with its joy it does not hold intercourse |
as an enemy. |
¹⁰ The heart knoweth his
own bitterness; and a stranger
doth not intermeddle with
his joy.

Here, the apposition is of the nouns "joy" and "enemy." "The knowing heart is a bitterness to itself; but with its joy it does not hold intercourse as with an enemy." "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth." "He that would follow Christ must deny himself." But with all these penitentiary pains, there is one blessing;—that, when we have joys, they are real. The sinner's joys blight him. With the Christian's joys we need not hold intercourse as with an enemy.

Three of the remaining cases have been noticed elsewhere (Classes V., II. and IX.); the rest will speak for themselves. We are careful to array them in the class, for what mutual support they can receive as new interpretations:—

VI.—CHAP. xvi : 3

- 3 Roll thy doings in the direction of Jehovah; |
and they shall have success according to thy |
plans. |
³ Commit thy works unto
the Lord, and thy thoughts
shall be established.

VII.—CHAP. xvi : 3x.

- 3x Grey hair, to be a crown of glory, |
must be found in the way of righteousness. |
^{3x} The hoary head is a
crown of glory, if it be found
in the way of righteousness.

VIII.—CHAP. xviii : 17.

- 17 He who is righteous as first in his own quarrel shall have his neighbor come and search him. 17 *He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.*

IX.—CHAP. xviii : 20.

- 20 From the gains of a man's mouth his belly is satisfied; as it is the product of his own lips, he is satisfied himself. 20 *A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled.*

X.—CHAP. xxii : 11.

- 11 The king, loving purity of heart, has graciousness of his lips as his near companion. 11 *He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend.*

CLASS XV.

OVERLOOKED INSTANCES

OF

NOUNS USED ADVERBIAILLY.

I.—CHAP. vi : 23.

- 23 For the commandment is a lamp, and what is directed is a light; and in the way of life is admonitory discipline. 23 *For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life;*

The point we wish to make is, that "way" was meant adverbially. We say in English, 'Sunday,' for 'on Sunday'; 'home,' for 'at home'; 'an hour' or 'a day' or 'a year,' for during these periods of time. We find in Hebrew plenty of substantives employed in this very manner. Other than as adverbial this noun would ruin the metaphor. "The commandment is a lamp!" Very well. That is very good. It suggests at once a path, and a lamp to light it. But when in the second clause reproofs are called that path (E. V.), the figure fails. Allow us to suppose that by "way" is meant, as in many another instance, "in the way," and all comes back into its place:—"The commandment is a lamp, and the law a light, and reproofs (like lanterns hung upon the trees) are in the way of life." I could not confirm this more strikingly than by showing, that in chap. 10:17 the mistake of the English Version is just reversed. There, "way" stands without a preposition, and ought to stand so. It ruins everything to take it adverbially; but then, fatally, the English Version puts the Italics in. The idea meant is, that a good man is a path; that men travel him as they would a high-road; i. e., that, as an avenue opens and leads on it people that travel through, so the good man is a conducting way to the Celestial City. This is made entirely complete by the closing clause; where the illphil also is unnoticed (E. V.); but where (that supplied) the bad man is represented as not being a path; that is, as doing the contrary service, and leading people astray. We quote this opposite case, as showing that the adverbial use has not

been unrecognized by scholars, and, even in this very word, has been suggested, and that on unwarranted occasions.

But now, again. It would be a very mixed metaphor to say, "Her house is the way to hell;" but if we make "house" adverbial, as it often is (Gen. 24:23; 38:11), the figure is complete. Moreover "ways" no longer puzzles us by being in the plural; and the "house" is no longer unpoetically mixed by being pictured as "going down" (as a way) to Sheol:—

II.—CHAP. vii:27.

- 27 The ways to Sheol are at her house
descending to the chambers of death.

²⁷ Her house is the way to
hell, going down to the cham-
bers of death.

The next case is in the twin picture. It is intended, doubtless, as a corresponding illustration:—

III.—CHAP. viii:2.

- 2 At high points in the road
she stands; at home among the paths.

² She standeth in the top
of high places, by the way in
the places of the paths.

The thought is beautiful. Not vaguely and clumsily "in the places of the paths" (E. V.), but simply, as in the other picture, "at home." Where the paths are of human travel, there Wisdom is. She confronts the traveler on any wild mission. The simple adverbial form relieves the figure in both these beautiful descriptions.

Very justly, too; for the English Version elsewhere has been on the watch for adverbs, and has made them unduly at times, without noticing a more simple rendering:—

CLASS XVI.

OVERLOOKED CASES WHERE ADVERBIAL USE

WAS

NOT REALLY INTENDED.

I.—CHAP. viii:22.

- 22 Jehovah got possession of me as the first of
His way;
before His works of old.

²² The Lord possessed me
in the beginning of his way,
before his works of old.

"In the beginning," if one word by itself, would be to all intents an adverb. That, being a noun, it is a noun in the construct state, is not our responsibility, but is to be explained by those who give it the adverbial use. But make "beginning" to be in apposition (see Class XIV.) with "me," that is, with Wisdom, and it is easily construed with the genitive. Then the meaning is beautiful. Jehovah possessed me, not "in the beginning of his way," but "as the beginning." And, making "possessed" more active, as the word really requires, we have this bright thought:—"Jehovah got possession of me as the very beginning of His way." That is,—In His everlasting journey, wisdom was His very first active life. He marched no stage without her. She goes back to the very opening of time; and no motion of His thought occurred till lie

got her in His possession. Here, then, is an instance of a noun, not adverbial, whose unadverbial character has not been noticed.*

A kindred intrusion of the adverb occurs in the sixteenth chapter. It seemed not exactly an adverb either, but a preposition and pronoun with an adverbial effect. A certain expression was supposed to mean "for himself" (E. V.). A like expression, except for a little difference, does mean "for himself" in many another passage. Our Versionists, therefore, were easily misled. But that slight difference, consisting in the presence of an article, restores a noun *in puro*; and God is represented not then as making everything for *Himself* (which has but a narrow truth), but as making everything for *His Decree*; the noun meaning, that utterance of the voice (15: 23) which makes answer, or commits a being to an exigent design. The case is important. Let us quote it:—

II.—CHAP. XVI: 4.

- 4 Jehovah has made everything for His de- | ⁴ The L ORD hath made all
cree; ^{things} for himself: yea, even
yea, even the wicked man for the day of evil.

The noun is made much of in another connection (15: 23; 16: 1). A man is said to be ruined by the decree of his mouth. God is pictured as having one great decree. Before all time He uttered plans that will never be added to (Ec. 3: 14). God does everything for this decree. And as it is unspeakably wise, it is but another form of saying, that God's Wisdom is a unit like Himself; and that for that grand unitary scheme everything that He has made has been from the very first devoted.

CLASS XVII.

OVERLOOKED FORCE OF THE GENITIVE.

The twenty-ninth chapter is one where a genitive occurs seven times, with every probability of the same bearing. The chance for a different bearing is that it might imply a passive; as for example in the thirteenth verse, "men of oppressions," might mean "men oppressed"; or, in the twenty-seventh verse, "a man of wrong" might mean, "a man suffering wrongfully." The fact that five of the cases eschew this passive sense; and that (1) "men of scorn" (v. 8), (2) "men of blood" (v. 10), (3) "a man of oppressions" (v. 13), (4) "a man of anger" (v. 29), and (5) "a man of wrong" (v. 27), all mean, men who obtrude these attributes, rather than those who suffer under them from others, very justly may excite the wonder that the two remaining instances were not thought of under the same relation:—

I.—CHAP. XXIX: 1.

- 1 A man given to reproving, who hardens the neck, | ¹ He that being often re-
proved, hardeneth his neck,
shall suddenly be broken, and that without remedy. | shall suddenly be destroyed,
and that without remedy.

* We discover that several scholars nearly translate as we do. The new volume of Zückler places the noun in apposition. But strangely enough; with this right, about the noun; he alters the whole sentence bodily; giving a new meaning to the verb; and making the whole sense to be, to *create*, instead of to *acquire* or *get possession*. We see no reason why the noun cannot be confronted in its apposed or downright significance, and yet the idea of *possession* be retained in the meaning of the verb.

II.—CHAP. xxix: 4.

- 4 A king by judgment gives stability to a land; but a man, free in his bestowals, pulls it down.
- 4 The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it.

Look first at the very first sentence. "He that being often reproved" is the English Version. "A man of reproofs" is the literal Hebrew. "A man of reproofs," if taken like those other genitives, would be "a reproving man;" just as, in verse thirteenth, "an oppressing man." That reproving others, when oneself a hypocrite, must be terribly hardening and fatal, is a strong, good doctrine. The sense, therefore, and the context, both favor the rendering as above presented. The fourth verse has the same arrangement; "a man of gifts." Hence the translation, a man who takes gifts; or, as our English has it, "he who receiveth gifts." As that would be passive, though, and against the usage of the chapter, why ought we not to think of the bestowing of gifts, or of a lax indulgent ruler, as the more likely sense? The thought is altogether more in place (see the Commentary); and the form, if this seventh instance is allowed, will then be alike over all the chapter.

The next instance is where a genitive is quite ignored. A certain Hiphil is turned into an accusative agreeing with a noun, instead of a genitive with which that noun is in the construct state:—

III.—CHAP. xvii: 2.

- 2 A wise servant shall have rule over the son of one who causes shame, and in the very midst of the brethren shall share the inheritance.
- 2 A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.

Here a personage of the verse is metamorphosed. In the English Version it is a son, in ours it is a father, that agrees with the Hiphil particle, and, as a hinge point in the verse, is represented as causing shame. Which is the more natural? If a son causes shame, the other brethren have no reason to call in a servant as a coheritor in a well-kept estate: but if a father causes shame, any possible chaos may arise; a servant, diligent to fill his place, may deserve a part, and may, from obvious causes, share, as Eliezer might, a portion of the heritage.

IV.—CHAP. xx: 29.

- 29 Glory with young men is their strength; and beauty with old men is grey hair.
- 29 The glory of young men is their strength; and the beauty of old men is the grey head.

This case is not so serious. It is a genitive of thought or estimate, lost sight of in mere possession. The beauty of old men is not gray hair; but they think it is; that is the meaning. The good man of King Charles was a rascal like himself. The point of the Proverb is, that glory with young men is strength, and beauty with old men is a gray head; and, therefore, men are not able to appreciate those higher and other gifts which they at the time do not happen to get hold of as their own.

There remain a class of instances which we have only been aroused to consider as redeeming one or two of the Proverbs of Solomon from utter and unmanageable commonplace. We may as well quote all, that we may be looking at the whole family together, and may make them share their mutual lights. One is 12: 17. "A false witness shows forth deceit." What could have been meant by that? And still a yet balder truism:—"A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies"

(14: 5). If that were found in a book of uninspired philosophy ! think of it ! Really, are such things reverent ? Were a man to hack all to pieces the pages of the most honored version, could he be thought so profane as when he attached such a meaning to the thought of the Holy Ghost ? But let us group cases as we said :—

V.—CHAP. vi : 19.

19 A deceived witness whose breath is lies ; and he that puts grounds of quarrel among brethren. | 19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and him that soweth discord among brethren.

VI.—CHAP. xii : 17.

17 He that breathes forth truth, publishes righteousness ; but the deceived witness, delusion. | 17 He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness : but a false witness deceit.

VII.—CHAP. xiv : 5.

5 He who witnesses things correctly, does not lie ; but, of a deceived witness, the very breath is lies. | 5 A faithful witness will not lie : but a false witness will utter lies.

VIII.—CHAP. xix : 5.

5 A deceived witness shall not go unpunished ; and he whose breath is lies shall not escape. | 5 A false witness shall not be unpunished ; and he that speaketh lies shall not escape.

IX.—CHAP. xix : 9.

9 A deceived witness shall not go unpunished ; and he whose breath is lies shall be lost. | 9 A false witness shall not be unpunished ; and he that speaketh lies shall perish.

X.—CHAP. xxi : 28.

28 A deceived witness perishes ; but a man that hearkens speaks forever. | 28 A false witness shall perish : but the man that hearketh speaketh constantly.

XI.—CHAP. xxv : 18.

18 A club and a sword and a sharp arrow is a man making answer for his neighbor as a deceived witness. | 18 A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.

There is scarce any word about which lexicographers seem so much at sea as the root of the verb to *witness*. Gesenius insists that it means to go over again, to repeat ; and hence, to say again and again, to testify. Fuerst declares, as though it were the burial of Moses, that no man knoweth where this root lies to this day. He conjectures, however, that it meant to be firm ; that the Piel meant to make firm ; and that, hence, by easy stages, we arrive at the idea of witnessing, or in our own minds holding firm the truth of any idea. Admitting this theory of Fuerst, or even that *witnessing* has (Hebraice) a mere conjectural origin, a witness of lies may be either of two things ; either a man who speaks lies ; or one who sees lies, that is, a man who confirms things in his mind in a false and mistaken relation. Now all the indications of sense favor this latter meaning. Those gaunt truisms,—how quick they here enrich themselves ! “A faithful witness will not lie” (14: 5), becomes a glorious text, when the faithful witness is no longer one that witnesses to others, but one beholding and confirming for himself. He that knows truth, really will not deceive. If a man deceives, it is a sign that he has not himself the deepest knowledge. Again, if a man has not himself knowledge, he certainly will deceive. These are all splendid doctrines ; and

they go down to the very bottom of the gospel. All sin is, at its root, delusion. If a man is not deluded, he cannot sin. If a man is spiritually deluded, he will lie, and wilfully deceive. Hence all these Proverbs require the light of a reflexive explanation. "*A false witness*" (E. V.) stands literally as a witness of falsehood. A witness of falsehood may be either one who speaks it, or one who thinks it. It cannot be one who speaks it in this catalogue of texts, because it would amount to this,—He who speaks falsehood, speaks falsehood; and, therefore, over all this Book, we must weed out these truisms, and bring out this profoundest truth;—that he who thinks falsehood, will necessarily speak it; and that no man can tell lies to others, who has not first of all been a *conformer* of lies for himself. Chap. 19:5 and chap. 19:9 might seem to stand differently; but a little reflection will bring these in also. "He who speaketh lies" (E. V.) is, literally, "he who breatheth lies," the sentiment is still more complete. He who sees false, breathes out falsehood as his daily breath. As, for example, the impenitent! He lives in the very atmosphere of deceit. And though it seems a hard thing to teach; yet, he who is so utterly deceived, must utterly perish. (See Commentary 21:28 for a variety of the thought). Then (25:18), a man who, under this false light, speaks, as he must do (14:5), so as to deceive his neighbor, is a noxious pest. This is what is forbidden in the ninth commandment. All sinners trespass here most mortally. All sinners are deceived; all, deceived, deceive others; all that deceive others, are murderous pests; or, as the Wise Man gives the language (25:18), "a maul and a sword and a sharp arrow."

CLASS XVIII.

UNNOTICED SIMPLICITY

OF THE

CONJUNCTION VAV.

Hebrew is a more unfurnished language than ours; and, therefore, many parts of speech have to do more than like forms among ourselves. This is eminently the case with the Conjunction *Vav*. It is illative (Gen. 13:9), and contingent (Job 29:12), and almost everything else. Hence, in that strange impulse to forget what is before us in our search beyond, we often lose sight of it as a plain conjunction, in our fancy of its more far-fetched sense. For example; the meaning has been lost by not noticing the simplicity of *vav* in the following instances:—

I.—CHAP. iii: 12.

12 For whom Jehovah loves He corrects,
and, as a father, does the son a favor.

12 For whom the Lord lov-
eth he correcteth, even as a
father the son in whom he
delighteth.

The straightforward "and" of simple conjunction is the only word that gives the rendering as we have already displayed it (Class VI.); not "whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a Father the son in whom he delighteth;" but, "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and favoreth as a father does a son."

II.—CHAP. ix : 16.

- 16 Whoso is simple let him turn in hither ;
yea, he who lacks sense. And she says to | ¹⁶ Whoso is simple, let him
turn in hither: and as for
him that wanteth understand-
ing, she saith to him,

This may not be an important instance. Without it, the closing words would belong only to the second clause. With it, the whole united sentence arrives at a conclusion. It is an interesting case of the correctness of making every word count. "Whoso is simple let him turn in hither, and he that is destitute of heart." And, now, as though it were all one person, the conjunction *vav* comes in as the simple copulate, and tells us what was her whole address. Chap. 3 : 22 is another instance, but has been noticed by other commentators. We are ready, therefore, for a further class that shall consist of instances just the opposite :—

CLASS XIX.

UNNOTICED INSTANCES

OF

VAV AS NOT A SIMPLE COPULATE.

I.—CHAP. xiv : 22.

- 22 Must they not err that devise evil,
seeing that Mercy and Truth devise good ? | ²² Do they not err that de-
vise evil, but mercy and
truth shall be to them that
devise good.

"Do they not err that devise evil?" What real force is there in such a question? Give *vav*, however, a causal force, and connect the first clause with the second, and there comes out a very satisfactory idea. "Do they not err that devise evil, *seeing that*, etc." The clause, which is very jejune taken by itself, has a chance for much more richness when leaning upon another. "Seeing that mercy and truth devise good;" not God; not Gabriel; not any imperfect saint; but unchallengeable impersonal excellence of character: seeing that mercy and truth, the two lights of the two tables of the law; seeing that these, devise good; must they not necessarily err, that undertake to devise evil? the doctrine of the passage being, the insanity of those that kick at intrinsic excellence.

II.—CHAP. xx : ii.

- ii Even by his common doings a child shall
make himself known.
Is he pure? is just also this,—Is his work
right?
- | ⁱⁱ Even a child is known
by his doings, whether his
work be pure, and whether it
be right.

This has been discussed under another class (Class VI.). The *vav* is a most pregnant one. To treat it merely as a copulate, makes a child's doings show whether his work is right; which, in different speech, means that his work shows his work. To get out of this truism, the second clause must be independent of the first: and to be so, the *vav* must be ambidextrous; it must mean a great deal more than can be translated into the simple copulate.

CLASS XX.

OVERLOOKED BEARING

OF THE

ABSENCE OF THE CONJUNCTION VAV.

If positively no reason appears for the absence or presence of a word we may then innocently think of the liberty of supplying it, or taking it away; but with much the same reserve with which a man may criticise a plant, or think that that bone or this bone might be out, and make a better body. Surely he has a strong position who has stood looking at the absent copulate till a most important and most intelligible reason for its absence begins to dawn upon his mind.

I.—CHAP. xxii : 5.

5 Thorns are snares in the way of the crooked | 5 Thorns and snares are
man. in the way of the froward; he
He that guards his soul shall get far from them. that doth keep his soul shall
be far from them.

Maurer, in enforcing the reading,—“Thorns and snares, etc.” (E. V.), or, as he more deferentially reads it,—“Thorns,—snares are in the way of the froward” (as though there were some rhetorical beauty in omitting the “and” (E. V.), though retaining the copulate sense), finds, very prudentially, a like omitted “and” in the Proverb just before. These shall be our only cases. It is remarkable that they should be found together. We claim that the admission of *vav* utterly mars and dissipates the sense. That thorns and snares beset the perverse man’s path (E. V.), is a very common idea; that thorns *are* snares is a very rich one. We are to plant thorns against the child (v. 6), to hedge him upon his duty. We are to employ humiliation to make us better (v. 4). But what is so happy for the good of the saint, is wretched in its effect upon the sinner. “Thorns are snares in the way of the froward;” and his direst sorrows will tempt him away from spiritual good. So with Maurer’s quotation:—

II.—CHAP. xxii : 4.

4 The end of a humiliation which is the fear of | 4 By humility and the fear
Jehovah of the Lord are riches, and
is wealth and honor and life.

We seize, what all men seem to have shrunk from, an instance of simple apposition. Not, “humility and the fear of the Lord” (E. V.); not, “humility *is* the fear of the Lord” (Umbreit); but “humility *as* the fear of the Lord.” There is a humility which is mere dejection. There is a humility which is mere brute penance: nay, one that is merely “voluntary” (Col. 2: 18); that is, I take it, ritualistic, or mere asceticism. And, therefore, anything rather than “*and*” (E. V.) was in the mind of Solomon, when he wished to characterize a humility answering to the fear of Jehovah; a lowly piety, or, rather, a pious lowliness, which he could not better describe than by these substantives apposed without the copulate. See, therefore, our reasoning:—The *text* is ours; and we have a right to

claim it. The *sense* is ours; because it is a great deal richer than the other. And this ought to be our principle in all our comments:—to stand firmly to the text, and expect as our reward a deeper and more graphic meaning.

CLASS XXI.

OVERLOOKED PRETERITES.

The usual tense of the Proverbs is the future. We translate it nearly always as the present. The present is but a dot of time; and it is, perhaps, philosophical in the East to moralize in a tense which is the present reaching on to the future. But when the past is introduced; that is, when there is employed a perfect; unless it have *vav conversive*, and thus become a certain peculiar future; it is very like that it is intended as emphatic, and, in that case, to be a key to the whole intention of the text where it is found. An expressed pronoun (Class X.) is no more likely to have a peculiar force, than a preterite; especially in the writings of this particular inspired man.

I.—CHAP. xi : 7.

- 7 By the death of a wicked man hope is lost; | 7 When a wicked man dieth.
and the expectation of sorrowing ones is lost | his expectation shall perish
already. | and the hope of unjust men
perisheth.

"The world passeth away, and the desires thereof" (1 Jo. 2:17). The ambitious man has no ambitions beyond the grave. "Shrouds have no pockets." The first clause, therefore, is very simple. But by a dexterous use of the preterite, the second clause goes further. Flushed hope may keep up heart till death; but the sorrowing; and with this in Hebrew there is an idea of *exhaustion* (see Gesenius), as well as suffering,—die earlier. Scores of men in the very middle of life are dead already. All of earth fades at death; but much of earth; viz., that which belongs to the sorrowing,—has perished out and died beforehand. The preterite, therefore, can be as pregnant as any of the other idiosyncrasies of Solomon.

II.—CHAP. xiii : 1.

- 1 A wise son has listened to a father's discip- | 1 A wise son heareth his
line: | father's instruction; but a
but a scorner to no rebuke.

"A wise son heareth his father's instruction" (E. V.), is a very humdrum and obvious idea. "A wise son has heard a father's instruction," is a very pregnant one. As the Hebrew justifies the last, it gives us, as in other instances, both sense and grammar. 'A leper comes in contact with lepers.' 'A leper has come in contact with lepers.' This is but a change into the past; and, yet, how totally different the force of the two passages when compared together.

So, in directly contrasted clauses:—

III.—CHAP. xxi : 22.

- 22 A wise man has scaled the city of the mighty, | 22 A wise man scaleth the
and is bringing down the strength of its place | city of the mighty, and cast-
of confidence. | eth down the strength of the
confidence thereof.

A wise man "has sealed." That is conversion. And "casts down." That is sanctification. He seizes the city at a rush. He fights down its citadel through his life-time afterward. There are many such discrepancies between Proverbial clauses.

IV.—CHAP. xxxi: 17.

- 17 She has girded her loins with strength,
and strengthens her arms. | 17 She girdeth her loins
with strength, and strength-
eneth her arms.

She *has* girded her loins. She did it in each saint as he first repented. She tied on "the girdle of truth" (Ephes. 6:14); but she was busy ever afterward in the strengthening of her arms.

Then there are just opposite cases. In the two just explained a work once for all, began and continued another work. In that which follows, another work begun and continued, has effected a higher work once for all :—

V.—CHAP. xxiv: 27.

- 27 Do up thy work without;
and adjust it for thyself in the field. | 27 Prepare thy work with-
out, and make it fit for thy-
self in the field; and after-
wards build thine house.

Do certain careful drudging ; toil, under certain horrid difficulties; work, afar off from what may seem thy rest; and thou *hast already* achieved thy good. The passage is a very strong one; and depends wholly upon this noticed preterite. "House" stands for all interests (see 1 Sam. 25:28). Do the hard work of the heart. Cut up the weeds of error. Work, a far distance away from anything that may seem rest or plenty; and thou *hast already* achieved thy heritage. The house that thou wouldst build, thou wilt find to have been built before thee. Even when, as in the case above this, the form might partake of the nature of the *vav conversive*, it must be remembered that the *vav conversive* has this very effect; not to make a dead perfect of the verb; else why not the perfect *à l'ordinaire*? but to make a future starting from the perfect past; that is, to make the strengthening of the arms (31:17) start, in the order of its sequence, from the girding of the loins with strength (see Green's Grammar, on the *Vav Conversive*).

CLASS XXII.

OVERLOOKED HIPHILS.

There is reason to believe that the Holy Ghost never selects a Hiphil without a distinct causative design. We ought to stand long upon a text, before we read as Kal, what is distinctly written as a Hiphil form. There are cases where a word is only used in the Hiphil; and, there, by long adoption into speech, it *seems* to wear into a word that has only a Kal significance. And yet, when we trace it back, we find it has not abated a jot of its causative idea. For example the word to *reprove* (רָאַבְנָה). It is used so commonly that we lose all causative trace; and yet, its root, the moment that is disclosed to view, explains entirely how it came to be a Hiphil form. *Reprove*, may seem in-causative enough; but when we trace back to a Kal, and find that that means to *be right*; and, then,

make a Hiphil of that, and find that that would mean to *cause to be right*; and then inspect the Hiphil (see Gesenius) which means to *set right*, to *judge*, to *justify*, and, finally, to *admonish* and *reprove*—we see clearly how it became a Hiphil; and now one secret of mistake has been, a not sufficient insisting upon a Hiphil use of all the distinctly written Hiphil expressions. For example; chap. 10:17 has been already noticed under another class (Class XV.). Not,—“He is *in the way of life* that keepeth instruction;” but, without the Italics, “He is a way of life;” and then, as a balancing idea,—not, “He that refuseth reproof, erreth;” but as it is found in the margin, (Hiphil) “causeth to err.” A good man is a path in which others may follow; a bad man is not a path; but, on the contrary, “causeth to err.”

Now for other cases of unnoticed Hiphil:—

I.—CHAP. xiv:18.

- 18 The simple have inherited folly: | 18 The simple inherit folly:
but the subtle make a crown of knowledge. | but the prudent are crowned
with knowledge.

Here the Hiphil has absolutely been turned into a passive (E. V.). To remedy this, Maurer turns it into a reflexive. Hermeneutics will certainly be improved when such liberties with the text are positively forbidden. Underneath, all this time, lay a grand meaning of the proper Hiphil. And as a reward that we may always expect for this honoring of the Holy Ghost, it is meaning far in advance of other comments, and that could only be evolved from a proper causative formation. Men are lost. When they believe, they are that moment saved. When they are saved, it is the fruit of a faith that consists only in knowledge (Ps. 9:10). When they are kings, all things heavenly and earthly are subject to them. Knowledge, therefore, is a crown. And the emblem is most rigid in its strictness. A crown does not buy a kingdom; but is a sign of it. So knowledge does not buy a kingdom. The glory of the saints is anything but the fruit of their imperfect knowledge. But knowledge is the sign of the kingdom. It is the badge, imperfect as it is, of our eternal kingship. Nay, it is more. The Christian seizes it as a crown. He that gets hold of faith, makes a crown of knowledge; and none but the Hiphil form could make the verb at all available to express the meaning.

So, in the next case:—

II.—CHAP. xxi:12.

- 12 He who gives wisdom to the righteous man: | 12 The righteous man wise-
by means of the house of the wicked, | ly considereth the house of
overturns the wicked by means of evil. | the wicked: but God over-
throweth the wicked for their
wickedness.

The two clauses of the verse have each a Hiphil. One means to make wise. The other means to make slide. Of course we do not subvert the Hiphil when we translate more neatly, to *teach*, and to *overthrow*. Most strangely, however, the Hiphil is seized in the second clause, but all the commentators quite ignore it in the first. Maurer translates, *attends*: and sees the wisdom of understanding *God* in both the clauses; but all the more strange is it, that he does not seize the Hiphil. The Kal, primarily, is to *see*; the Hiphil, primarily, to *cause to see*. Right then before our face, is the naked reading that brings out all the beauty of the passage. “He that causes a righteous man to see by a view of the house of the wicked, causes a wicked man to slide by a view of evil.” The doctrine is complete. The same evil that teaches a righteous man, subverts and corrupts the wicked.

III.—CHAP. xxviii : 7.

7 He that observes direction is a son that gives instruction ; but he that keeps company with the base does even his father harm.

An utter commonplace must be an erroneous translation. The first clause in the English Version is an utter commonplace. Why may not this be enthroned as a maxim for the exegete? Solomon was naturally a wise man (2 Sam. 12 : 24). Solomon was supernaturally a wise man (1 Ki. 3 : 12). Solomon was positively inspired. Moreover, he dealt in Proverbs. It is impossible to believe that a Proverb (which is a terse form of speech); and a proverb of a son of David; and a proverb of one supernaturally wise; and, moreover, of the Holy Ghost, as inspiring this naturally shrewd and supernaturally sagacious king; should flatten out into an expression like this:—" Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son" (E. V.). We ought to think of this more in all the commonplaces of our versions. For now, when we come to rebel, and stand, and insist that there shall be some more sagacious utterance, we see anomalies of form, that at least lie clumsily under the common rendering. Among these is a Hiphil. The mere adhesion to it deepens and improves the sense. Not, "Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son;" but, " Whoso keepeth, etc., is a son that makes wise." The meaning is, that even an inferior, if a Christian, is *nolens volens* an effective instructor of others; but, if impenitent, does even his superiors harm.

Some of these Hiphils have been restored and illustrated by other commentators.

CLASS XXIII.

OVERLOOKED IMPERATIVES.

We confess that the first case that we shall give has nothing to decide it but the sense. In fact, an ambidextrous significance, that includes both imperative and indicative, is one that one could not easily denounce. We are ready to translate imperatively, because the grammar yields it; and because the imperative sense is altogether more gravid than the indicative. That a wise son will make a glad father, is stupid, except where it is notoriously untrue. But that a wise son should make a glad father is very important teaching. It meets a weakness of men. They rejoice in money, or in talent, or in promotion, for their sons, far more than they do in piety. The texts that follow seem to be arguing this fault. And it is a fine and a very timely counsel, that if parents catch sight of piety in those they love, they ought to rejoice in it more than in any other wealth —nay, that they should welcome this as the only talent to be glad about at all. This first case, therefore, is for the sense, rather than for the form, which might answer in either fashion:—

I.—CHAP. x : 1.

I PROVERBS OF SOLOMON.

Let a wise son make a glad father ; and let a foolish son be the grief of his mother.

I The Proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father; but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

The second case claims the form as well as the sense:—

II.—CHAP. XII : 25.

- 25 Is there anxiety in the heart of a man, let him subdue it : 25 Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop; but a good word maketh it glad.

Umbreit came very near this rendering, but fails of it in the second clause. Both clauses have imperatives. As indicatively the sense is *nil*; for who needs to be informed that heaviness in a heart makes a heart heavy? How possibly could we have tolerated so long such inanities? Moreover, the grammar is awry. "Heaviness" is feminine; "maketh stoop" (E. V.), is masculine, without the apology, for disagreement, of a verb before a noun (see Green, Gr. § 275, 1; also 20 : 18). Read imperatively, the sense is strong. Heaviness in the heart of a man is a crime, as our Saviour taught us (Luke 24 : 38). If we find it there, we are to subdue it. And instead of lazily lying under it, as we usually do, we are to call up the good words of life, that are to scatter it totally away.

III.—CHAP. XX : 18.

- 18 Do thou be fixed in plans by counsel ; 18 Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war.
and by helmsmanship make war.

We quote this formally, not for any great importance of the case, but to multiply the proof, and to show how such a reading can pass entirely unnoticed. There are grammatical difficulties in the verse; but no greater under one form than the other.

IV.—CHAP. XXIII : 25.

- 25 Let thy father rejoice, and thy mother ; 25 Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice.
and let her that bare thee be glad.

The value of these imperatives is, *inter alia*, to prevent repetition. Read indicatively, this twenty-fifth verse is a mere repetition of the twenty-fourth. Such repetition will answer in anything better than in formal proverbs.

V.—CHAP. XXX : 31.

- 31 a greyhound, or a he-goat. 31 A grey-hound; an he-goat, also; and a king, against whom there is no rising up.
and a King ! Do not thou stand against Him.

The passage has been very much perplexed. The very look of the commentaries shows pause and doubt; and that desperate resource, the knife, in this spiritual surgery, has been repeatedly proposed, to mend the difficulties of the expression. The imperative ought earlier to have been thought of, because this negative is that which belongs to it. The rule is a very rigid one. *Al* (אָל) is not used with indicative verbs. And we have looked with much fear whether we were not forgetting some point; it seemed so incomprehensible that an imperative which unlocked a riddle, and gave a most perfect sense to a most puzzled passage, was not detected by this very אָל, which lay, like the tag of a merchant, distinctly to give the direction of the parable.

CLASS XXIV.

UNNOTICED FORCE
OF THE
PREPOSITION LAMEDH.

I.—CHAP. xiv : 35.

- 35 The kindness of a king is a wise servant; but his wrath becomes one that brings shame.

35. The king's favour is to ward a wise servant; but his wrath is against him that causeth shame.

We say in English, 'I take that for an offence'; or, 'I ran for government'; or, 'I used that for a signal.' Such, unnoticed, is the force of this instance of *lamedh*. It is not,—"The king's favor is toward a wise servant;" what, of a useful description, would that aphorism particularly teach? It is,—"The king's favor," in the sense of kindness; the kind character and habits of king,—are a wise servant (literally, *are for*, or, *serve for*, such a servant); a king's kindness of heart is his best servant; but his anger; that is, a morose and tyrannic life,—is a dangerous servant; and one, as the Proverb expresses it, that must sooner or later, be a "cause of shame." The very same unnoticed meaning occurs again in the nineteenth chapter:—

II.—CHAP. xix : 23.

- 23 The fear of Jehovah serves as a life; and he that is satisfied with it has a dwelling; he shall not be visited as an evil.

23. The fear of the Lord tendeth to life; and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil.

"The fear of the Lord tendeth to life," is a very worn idea. Little, fresh, can be made of it. The fear of the Lord is *for* a life, or *answers for* one; the fear of the Lord is itself a life; that meets all the necessities of our being; "the fear of the Lord serves as a life; and he that is satisfied with it has a dwelling;" this is a truth that is worthy of the formal enunciation.

But now a different case:—

III.—CHAP. xix : 27.

- 27 Cease, my son, to hear admonition, with the result of wandering further from the words of knowledge.

27. Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.

We say in English,—'He worked just to kill himself.' We mean by this,—He worked, not in order to kill himself, but with that result. The Hebrew has the same idiomatic *lamedh*. "Cease, my son, to hear instruction with the result of wandering from the words of knowledge." Like many another proverb, it lies deep. It does not mean lying instruction, "which causeth to err" (E. V.); it does not mean flattering instruction, in order to wander away; but it means pious instruction; and points to the fact, that the very holiest truth hardens and stupifies the sinner. Do not hear instruction with the result of mischief. So versatile is *lamedh*, that we must detect all that it intends.

For example, this other case:—

IV.—CHAP. xxi: 31.

- 31 A horse is made ready against a day of battle;
and salvation against Jehovah.

31 The horse is prepared
against the day of battle: but
safety is of the LORD.

We say in English, 'Set that to the interest account.' Such would be a use of *lamedh* very near the interpretation of the text. "The horse is prepared to the day of battle." The English version very properly changes it, and supplies "*against*," as much neater in our English idiom. But what right has it to say "*against*" in the first clause, and to translate it "*of*" (though it be the very same preposition), in the second. It ought to be a strong motive, that shall divert the same *lamedh*, in the same text, and in the same antithetical situation in the text, when the same verb, and the same general sense, would lead us most necessarily to look for the same signification. The Wise Man has been arguing that we cannot outwit the Almighty; and then succeeds this very plain idea,—that a horse is prepared against a day of battle, but salvation against Jehovah. That the same *lamedh* could mean "*of*" Jehovah in another Scripture (Ps. 3:8), is no overwhelming difficulty. We are speaking of the same verse. In the same verse the antithetical thoughts ought to assimilate the same prepositions.

Again :—

V.—CHAP. xxvi: 2.

- 2 Like a bird, as to roaming, like a swallow as
to flight,
so a curse to no purpose does not come.

2 As the bird by wandering,
as the swallow by flying;
so the curse causeless shall
not come.

Here the English is no parallel. We do not say,—‘ As the bird *to* wandering, as the swallow *to* flying;’ but we do speak that way in Hebrew. (1 Ki. 10:23; Job 32:4). The best circumlocution in the English is, *as to*, or *in respect to*. Solomon wishes to illustrate that a curse does not come without a purpose. He impresses the greater thing, therefore, by the less. If the meanest movement of a bird is not without a purpose; if each skim of a swallow has some meaning^{*} in it even to his feeble mind,—of course, then, there is a meaning to a curse. This is the exact significance. “Like a bird, as to roaming, like a swallow, as to flight, so a curse purposeless does not come.”

CLASS XXV.

UNNOTICED FORCE

OF

PREPOSITIONS OTHER THAN LAMEDH.

For example, $\frac{3}{7}$:—

I.—CHAP. XXV : 20.

- 20 One tricking out a garment on a cold day;
vinegar upon natron;
and a singer of songs upon an evil heart.

*As he that taketh away
a garment in cold weather,
and as vinegar upon nitre, so
is he that singeth songs to an
heavy heart.*

The natural meaning of $\exists y$ is *upon*. If a sense is suggested that gives

בַּיִת its natural meaning, *ceteris paribus* that sense has the chiefest rights. We say in English,—'This grief came upon an empty fisc ;' or, 'that blow struck me upon a wearied condition of spirit.' Make "heavy" (E. V.), "evil" (and that is the simple Hebrew), and how much better, "songs on an evil heart," than songs to an evil heart." "Songs to a heavy heart" (E. V.) are about the best things we can employ; but "songs on an evil heart" show a mad delusion. As "one tricking out a garment on a cold day," when the main thing is to have the garment on, and not to have it beautiful; so is he that singeth songs upon an evil heart, that is, with one; a man rejoicing in life, when, at the moment, he is at the gates of death.

Now take two instances of בְּיַת :—

II.—CHAP. xxvi : 12.

- 12** Seest thou a man wise in his own eyes ?
Hope for a fool must be outside of him.

12 Seest thou a man wise in
his own conceit ? there is
more hope of a fool than of
him.

III.—CHAP. xxix : 20.

- 20** Seest thou a man hasty in his words ?
hope for a fool is outside of him.

20 Seest thou a man that
is hasty in his words ? there
is more hope of a fool than of
him.

Each of these characters is the worst sort of "fool;" and, therefore, as a comparison how awkward ! It is like saying, 'Seest thou a man knock another on the head ? there is more hope of a murderer than of him.' It would not be easy, either, to parse just this Hebrew, if it be made comparative. But the noun, and the *lamedh* before another noun, and the בְּיַת, fixed just as this one is before a pronominal suffix, would hold with a sense of בְּיַת, which the Lexicons elsewhere have actually given. For example

Gesenius, Prov. 20 : 3,—"To sit outside of strife." Num. 15 : 24,—"Away from the eyes of the congregation." Imagining a character within a character, so to speak, hope for a fool is represented as *outside* of either of two parts of him, or special characters. One of these is the *self-wise* part (26 : 12); and the other the *ready-to-promise*; that is, the *hasty-speaking* (29 : 20); or, *well-intentioned*; and hence, as the result, the *self-confident*, part or character of the unbelieving sinner.

A still more covert mistake has been in the instance of בְּ :—

IV.—CHAP. xxix : 2.

- 2** By the righteous being made great, the people are made glad ;
but by the wicked man bearing rule, a people are made to mourn.

2 When the righteous are
in authority, the people re-
joice ; but when the wicked
bear rule, the people
mourn.

The preposition בְּ in the great majority of cases means *by* rather than *when*. The Scriptures generally would be improved by weeding out the temporal signification. We know it is a circumlocution, and intended to stand for *in*, and occurs only before the infinitive; but *in*, in many cases, is not the force of it; but it is distinctly a causal,—*by*. What we mean to affirm is, that the preposition בְּ, in a vast majority of cases, means *by means of*, when our Version reads it "*when*." A case to show this is in the text that follows :—

V.—CHAP. xxix : 16.

- 16** By the wicked being made great sin is made great ;
but the righteous see clearer by their fall.

16 When the wicked are
multiplied, transgression in-
creaseth ; but the righteous
shall see their fall.

A safe venture, beyond a doubt, is the translation of the same word in the same way, except for very peculiar causes, in the same sentence. We have a right to suppose a similarity. It cannot but be intended; and it may be the very thing rhetorically significant. To translate as the English Version does,—“*are multiplied*,” which is but one meaning of the word; and,—“*increaseth*,” which is manifestly another; and by that, I mean, in the same clause, and in the same active intransitive form; ought, to say the least, to have the very strongest reasons for its excuse; for such things are the very likeliest to hide the very gem of an intended relation. The verb means, in its naked significance, simply to *grow great*. This fits each end of the clause. Translate,—“*by*,” now, instead of “*when*” (E. V.), for the preposition; and we have this thought;—“By the wicked being made great sin is made great;” which means that sin grows *with* the sinner; that the sin of a rustic is less than the sin of a sage; that the sin of some poor child is less than the sin of Satan; and that souls grow in trespass (being given up to it because they grow in guilt), as they exceed, one man or one angel the rest, in the breadth or in the strength of their soul’s intelligence. All this is covered over in King James by the want of sameness in the verb, and by the feebler handling of the preposition. But again; the verb to *see* is sometimes thought to employ the preposition simply to express the act of seeing. We greatly doubt it; and are inclined to the belief, that it always employs it to express seeing brighter *by* a thing; i. e., being awaked to vision *by* the thing that finds itself thus connected. When the Night, under the execration of Job, is not to see *by* the eyelids of the Morning (Job 3:9); or when the hypocrite is not to see *by* the rivers, the brooks of honey and butter (Job 20:17); or when even God is said to see *by* the affliction of Leah (Gen. 29:32), who shall say that it does not mean more than *seeing* without the preposition; that it does not interpose the idea of being made to see *by*, and that even God is poetically said to be waked up to see *by* the affliction of Leah, just as we apply to Him the passions and the acts, and even the jealousies and repentances that we ascribe to man? However that may be, this Proverb peremptorily requires such a treatment. By the wicked being made great sin is made great; yet what matter! When all seems to be hurrying to death, all is overruled. Stupendous sufferings are to result from stupendous sinnings; but what then? All is to be a lesson to the universe; more definitively to the righteous part of the universe; or, as the second clause expresses it, “the righteous shall *see by* their fall.”

Now once again :—

VI.—CHAP. XXX : 6.

- 6 Add thou not unto His words; lest He use thee for purposes of reproof, and thou be shown up as false.

Gesenius treats **בָּ** as merging in the verb to *see*, with some likelihood, for he can quote many examples; but after the verb to *reprove* he has but one, and this instantly breeds suspicion. A good clue to discovery would be to mark those dicta in a lexicon which quote for themselves but a single passage. Why, if *reprove* never takes a preposition, should it be conceived as doing so in this single sentence? And why not probe the sentence, and find, just as we have been glad to do, that the meaning needs the preposition, without tacking it to the verb—that God reproves by a man, as well as reproves a man directly; and that reproving by any one is a much more solemn thing than his being reproved himself, by

cause it seems to imply that the victim personally has passed the possibility of obtaining benefit? This will suffice then for peculiarities of *béth* (בְּ), except as they occur in a class that follows

CLASS XXVI.

UNNOTICED CASES OF BÉTH (בְּ) ESSENTIÆ.

We say in English,*—'Pay in doubloons,' or,—'They came in swarms,' or,—'It was in the deep villain that he appeared on that stage.' In French* it is still more common. '*Agir en honnête homme*,' means to play the part of an honest man. This is the *béth* (בְּ) *essentiæ* of the Hebrews. (See for a confessed instance chap. 3:26).

I.—CHAP. xiii:17.

- 17 A wicked messenger falls as being an evil ; | 17 A wicked messenger fall-
but a faithful errand-man is health. | eth into mischief; but a faith-
ful ambassador is health.

II.—CHAP. xvii:20.

- 20 The crooked in heart cannot find good ; | 20 He that hath a froward
and he that is subversive in his tongue, must | heart findeth no good; and
fall as being an evil. | he that hath a perverse ton-
gue falleth into mischief.

III.—CHAP. xxiv:16.

- 16 For the righteous man shall fall seven times, | 16 For a just man falleth
and rise again; | seven times, and riseth up
while the wicked shall be overthrown as an | again: but the wicked shall
evil. | fall into mischief.

IV.—CHAP. xxviii:14.

- 14 Blessed is the man who fears continually; | 14 Happy is the man that
but he that hardens his heart shall fall as | feareth alway; but he that
being an evil. | hardeneth his heart shall fall
into mischief.

These four are all alike. The *béth* (בְּ) *essentiæ* has been quite unobserved. The translation "into" (E. V.), which has befallen all of them, has left them flattened wretchedly into such language as this,—"A wicked messenger falleth into mischief" (13:17). "A perverse tongue falleth into mischief" (17:20). "But the wicked shall fall into mischief" (24:16). "He that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief" (28:14). The noun in each of the four is יָמֵן, or פָּרָעֵן, which mean simply *evil*. But bring in the *béth* (בְּ) *essentiæ*, as has been done in this version, and commonplace immediately disappears; we have, then, one bold thought, viz., that these characters are an evil. If commonplace were more distinctly tabooed in Scripture, men would go searching with more keen avidity after a fresher sense; and, instead of such tritenesses as that bad men shall fall into mischief, we would have such deeper senses as this; —that the "wicked messenger," and the "perverse tongue," and the hardener of his own heart, are evils; i. e., are plague-spots in the intelli-

* And these very expressions,—'in French,' and, 'in English,' are of a like character. 'Let us speak in French.' 'The book appeared first in English.'

gent universe ; and, as such, cannot complain of their fate ; because, as a necessity for the rest, they must fall *as evils*. A fifth text (19 : 23) might seem to be similar. It is without the *bith*, however. The mistake has been the same ; and the reading has to be equivalent. "The fear of Jehovah is a life" (see Class XXIV) ; and he that is satisfied with it shall have a dwelling. He shall not be visited *as an evil*."

V.—CHAP. XX : 30.

- 30 The welts of a wound cleanse though as an evil ; so do stripes the very chambers of the belly. | 30 The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil ; so do stripes the inward parts of the belly.

Here the same *beth* (בְּ), and the same noun or adjective used substantively, viz., בָּן, fall into the same state, though in a deeper and more varied Proverb. The value of chastisement is the thing to be considered ; in fact the gain, by suffering, to the whole intelligent creation. The world's sufferings are a monstrous "evil." Therefore, the texture of the Proverb. "The blueness of a wound" (E. V.) ; more literally, "the welts of a wound,"—"cleanse in an evil," (*beth essentiae* ; "as an evil") ; that is, the black swelling seems an unmitigated mischiel, just like life's sufferings to the complaining sinner ; but the swollen tumor is discharging the sore, just as stripes, the inner chamber of our corruption. This *bith* will play an important part with future expositors. We give a double case :—

VI.—CHAP. XXV : 8.

- 8 Go not forth hastily to strive ; lest what thou doest, in its after consequence, be thy neighbor putting thee to shame. | 8 Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame.

"What thou do in the end thereof," is here, "What thou do as the end thereof," and then, not "*when* thy neighbor" (E. V.), but "*in* thy neighbor," or (*beth essentiae*) "*as* thy neighbor :" creating the idea, "lest what thou effectest as the end thereof be *as* thy neighbor," or (expressing the whole more neatly) "*be* thy neighbor putting thee to shame."

Other newly-detected cases are sufficiently similar to be merely appended in a list :—

VII.—CHAP. V : 14.

- 14 I soon became like any wicked man in the midst of the congregation and assembly. | 14 I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.

VIII.—CHAP. XIII : 23.

- 23 Much to eat is the light of the poor ; but there is that is swept away as not judgment. | 23 Much food is in the tillage of the poor ; but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment.

IX.—CHAP. XIV : 3.

- 3 The mouth of a fool is a sceptre of pride, but the lips of the wise shall guard them. | 3 In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride : but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.

CLASS XXVII.

UNNOTICED CASES OF VERBS REQUIRING
A PREPOSITION.

Singularly enough the only case we shall quote recognizes (E. V.) the need of a preposition under the first clause, and drops it off, though it stands all ready in its place, and devotes it to something else in the second. Let us explain. There are certain verbs that require a preposition after them, either always or sometimes, as the case may be, to carry their meaning to the noun. For example in English: I can say, 'I watch over a post,' and the preposition *over* stands exactly related as the preposition now alluded to does in the Hebrew text. The unnoticed case I am to mention is, where this proper preposition is forgotten, and wanders off from the verb, and gets into the wheels, so as to obstruct the sentence:—

I.—CHAP. xvii: 12.

- 12 Let a bear robbed of her cubs meet a man; | 12 Let a bear robbed of her
but not a fool his folly. whelps meet a man, rather
than a fool in his folly.

"Let a bear robbed of her cubs meet a man." Here was a start in every respect complete. The verb to *meet* takes with it in the first clause a preposition (*בְּ*, *beth*) which appears before the noun "*man*," just as it does after other verbs of like import. We say in English, *meet with*, and the force of the *beth* is, therefore, in the first clause, undoubted. Why is it not to be retained in the second? The verb being understood in the second clause, and the preposition being there in place all ready for it, how strange to forget that it can have any such connection, and to ruin the sense by giving it an independent meaning. Read,—"Let a bear robbed of her cubs meet a man rather than a fool *in* his folly" (E. V.), and we have no very thoughtful picture. Read,—"Let a bear robbed of her cubs meet a man rather than a fool *his* folly," and we have most stirringly the remorse and gnashing of teeth and horrible self-accusation that he is to find hereafter. The difference is immense, considering the slender change that is all that is apparent.

Now sometimes the mistake is just the opposite:—

CLASS XXVIII.

UNNOTICED CASES OF VERBS

NOT

REQUIRING A PREPOSITION.

The verb *see* does not require a preposition:—

I.—CHAP. xxix: 16.

- 16 By the wicked being made great sin is made | 16 When the wicked are
great; multiplied, transgression in-
but the righteous see clearer by their fall. creaseth: but the righteous
shall see their fall.

The verb *reprove* does not require a preposition :—

II.—CHAP. XXIX : 6.

- 6 Add thou not unto His words ; lest He use thee for purposes of reproof, and thou be shown up as false. | 6 Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

The verb to *punish* does not require one:—

III.—CHAP. xvii : 26.

- 26 Even deserved punishment to the righteous does not seem good when designed to chasten the willing with a view to holiness.

26 Also to punish the just is not good, nor to strike princes for equity.

These cases have all been considered previously (Classes XXV., IV.). Two of the three (17: 26; 30: 6) are quoted by Gesenius as his sole authorities. The last instance has been very carefully commented upon; and we beg the reader to refer to its most recent exposition (Class IV.).

IV.—CHAP. xxi: 12.

- 12** He who gives wisdom to the righteous man by means of the house of the wicked, overthrows the wicked by means of evil.

We do not intend to recapitulate here (see Class IV.), but glance hastily at a former suggestion (17:12). When the same word, in the same shape and in the same text, and standing similarly in each of the clauses, is capable, without any distortion of sense, of the very same translation, it seems a marvel of mistake to equip it with any other. Such is precisely the condition of *lamedh* as the preposition in the case before us.

CLASS XXIX.

UNNOTICED CASES OF RETURN

TO

A PRIMARY SENSE.

Of course, to a Hebrew eye, when a verb to be *level*, or a verb to be *straight*, or a verb to be *whole*, comes to mean something moral, and is translated, to be *just* or *upright*, the primary meaning is not forgotten, but is there gleaming out under the bottom of the heap. A Hebrew eye never loses it, but sees it whenever it comes upon the page, and is ready to understand the author, whenever, with whatsoever suddenness, he resorts to it as a primary again. Our own vigilance ought to be in this direction. The lists we give are where we have suffered by what is not vernacular; because an un-Hebrew eye, accustomed to an abstract use, fails to be ready when the writer suddenly returns to an original signification.

For example:—

I.—CHAP. xiii : 14.

14 The direction of a wise man is a burrowing | **14** The law of the wise is a
out place of life, fountain of life, to depart from
for getting away out of the snares of death. the snares of death.

II.—CHAP. xiv : 27.

27 The fear of Jehovah is where life burrows | **27** The fear of the Lord is
out a fountain of life, to depart
in getting away out of the snares of death. from the snares of death.

"Fountain" (E. V.) is a very frequent word, and occurs so uniformly as almost to hide its old derivation. To a Hebrew eye its derivation is not lost, but is always visible, like a pebble at the bottom. A verb to *dig* and a substantive form of it, and a form preceded by **בַּ**, which means *ground* or *place*, would all serve up before him the idea of a *dug place*, or a *dug out place*. And if at any time a writer returned to this original significance, the Jew would not be as helpless as we are, to understand his meaning. Now "a fountain of life" (E. V.) confounds both these sentences. "*A fountain*" is no way to "*depart*"; and, were it not our fault to bow too much to unmeaning expressions, and to impute to the Holy Ghost what, *in literis*, we would have rebelled against in our fellow men, we would have battled long ago for some simile not so desperately mixed. This stopping would have brought out the key. The fear of the Lord is not a fountain of life (E. V.); for what sort of imagery is that, for departing from the snares of death? But, *radice revisitata*, it is a *place dug out*. As the snare lies upon the ground, it is the hole whence we may burrow and escape. Such a hole is made by a "fountain." But such a hole is made by many other things. We get the clue by going back: and this instance will be of royal use in strengthening our convictions as to other innovating renderings that are yet to follow.

III.—CHAP. xii : 22.

12 Protracted delay enfeebles the heart ; | **12** Hope deferred maketh
but the desire arrived at is a tree of life. the heart sick : but when the
desire cometh, it is a tree of life.

A secondary meaning of **תָּלַכְנָה** is, to be *sick*. An earlier meaning is, to be *weak*. A secondary meaning of the Hiphil is, to *make sick*, and an earlier meaning, to *make weak*. A secondary meaning of **תִּרְחַדְנָה** is *hope*; a primary meaning is *delay*. The root out of which it comes means primarily, to *wait*, and secondarily, or artificially, to *hope* or to *expect*. This all would naturally appear before a Hebrew eye. But to the Versionists, accustomed to see the secondary senses, these take the eminence; and hence the versions in their different Books. The inspired Solomon, however, is wielding a vernacular. The "heart" is that susceptibility of heart, which the Spirit uses in renewing it by grace. "Delay" is the delay of the sinner. The dictum is that striking one, that all delay weakens the heart; and then, to make the second clause more intense, instead of saying,—All promptness strengthens the heart, he brings forward a much more exhilarating idea. The desire accomplished; that is, the wish to have religion ours, once attended to, and accomplished in our nature; not only elevates, but saves us. It is a triumph once for all. It is "a tree of life." And as that mystic plant saved by one morsel of its fruit; so, one act of attention to our longing looks to the unnumbered ages. There may be afterward a most agonizing fight; but that first obedience starts our deliverance forever.

The next instance is somewhat akin:—

IV.—CHAP. XIII : 15.

- 15 Good intelligence gives grace ;
but the way of the faithless is perpetual.

|¹⁵ Good understanding giv-
eth favour: but the way of
the transgressors is hard.

Good intelligence ; that is, light ; and *spiritual* light, which is of course good,—yields grace. It promotes the grace of the Christian ; and promotes it steadily, and all the time. But the way of the sinner has not even a vicissitude of light. It is “perpetual,” “Hard” (E. V.), in this case, has not even the rights of a secondary usage. The great central thought of the root is a perennial state (Num. 24: 21). Light upon the Christian’s mind is bringing him affluxes of more grace ; but the sinner, knowing no change for the better, is locked in upon a path in its own nature “perpetual.”

V.—CHAP. XVIII : 24.

- 24 A man of friends is apt to be broken all to pieces ; but there is that loves cleaving closer than a brother.

|²⁴ A man that hath friends must show himself friendly ; and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

The time will come when a translation will be overthrown simply by the first glance at its commonplace. Men will become jealous for the pithiness of Scripture. Now for two reasons ; first, that it has no sense in the context ; and second, that it has but little in itself,—the first clause of this verse in other translations ought to be put upon a better base. This we can be helped to by the main root of the verb. Some of the commentators come near to that. But we see no reason why we should not adopt it squarely. The main root is to *break*. This is the Hithpael. We see no reason why we should not translate by the reflexive of *break*. “A man of friends is apt to break himself ; but there is that loves, cleaving closer than a brother.”

This need of remembering what words primarily implied occurs sometimes with the verb meaning to *be open* :—

VI.—CHAP. I : 10.

- 10 My son, if sinners would make a door of thy simplicity, afford thou no entrance.

|¹⁰ My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.

To translate here simply to “entice” (E. V.), would miss the beauty. There is a balancing with the verb rendered “consent” (E. V.), which also on its part needs the rendering as from the root to *enter*.

So in the next case, the word “taste,” must not drift away from its own original. To translate it “reason” (E. V.), which it does sometimes mean, ruins everything. The Wise Man has been speaking of the “dish.” He has been representing the impenitent as too indolently benumbed to lift salvation, when his hand is in the very “dish.” And then follows this Proverb, which is not adequately understood unless the “taste” is the thing contemplated : that is, the “taste,” as reported back by some man who has actually partaken of salvation :—

VII.—CHAP. XXVI : 16.

- 16 The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who report back the taste.

|¹⁶ The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.

Again the verb in the following verse :—

VIII.—CHAP. xxvii : 8.

- 8 As a bird is shaken from its nest ; so a man is shaken from his place. | 8 As a bird that wandereth from her nest ; so is a man that wandereth from his place.

What is the emblem of a bird wandering from her nest ? What does a bird want with a nest ? and what relation has a nest to any human refuge ? or, at all, as an asylum or dwelling for the bird ? It is only when the verb goes back to its original that we arrive at any exquisite sense. The verb means, to be shaken. All other meanings are derivative. The very sight of that sense flashes out at once the genuine significance. "As a bird is shaken from her nest." That is ; as the young fledgling loathes to get out from its support, and is afraid to take to the air, so a man has to be shaken from his place ; so the poor impenitent has to be driven from the spot where is all that he has ever stood upon, and whence he shrinks from setting forth. Quote the verb in its root, and the picture breaks upon our vision. Give it any of its secondary sense, and a thick haze is drawn at once over all that it intends.

IX.—CHAP. xx : 22.

- 22 Say not, I will make the evil good ; wait on Jehovah, and let Him help thee. | 22 Say not thou, I will recompense evil ; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

Few words have established a more frequent secondary meaning than the Pihel in the first clause in the sense of "recompense" (E. V.). The Kal means, to be whole ; but the Pihel has meant, to make whole, in the sense of paying, in almost every instance ; suddenly, however, there may be returns to the primary (Ez. 33 : 15), and this, as one of them, has confounded everything by not being noticed. The Wise Man has been speaking of hasty gettings (v. 21) ; of grappling after wealth, and waiting for that to be gotten, to get leisure for salvation. He denounces plans like this ; and then says,— "Say not I will make whole the evil." That is,—Do not let religion drift for a while, under the intention of making good the wickedness. No counsel could be more graphic. Men grasp after competence with the very thought to get this episode over that they may go after Christ. The text has been lost in its significance. That natural thought of getting aside our cares, and thus preparing to be righteous, is here condemned as being an attempt to make good an evil.

X.—CHAP. xxvii : 1.

- 1 Praise not thyself in the morrow ; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. | 1 Boast not thyself of tomorrow ; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

Instead of the more secondary "Boast thyself" (E. V.), translate here.— "Praise thyself," and we have two immediate results ; first, we throw the verse into better relation with the next, in which the verb "praise" also occurs ; and second, we picture best the impenitent. He not only *boasts* of the morrow, but he *praises himself in it* ; that is, he admires a wisdom which he has cherished, not for this day, but the next.

Most signal of all is the next case :—

XI.—CHAP. xxviii : 12.

- 12 In the exulting of the righteous there is great beauty ; but, when the wicked rise, a man must dig deep to understand it. | 12 When righteous men do rejoice, there is great glory : but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden.

XII.—CHAP. xxviii : 28.

- 28** By the wicked rising a man is puzzled ; but, by their perishing, the righteous are made great. | ²⁸ When the wicked rise, men hide themselves : but when they perish, the righteous increase.

Here the primaries have lain entirely hid. What is literal, however, does not appear till we take the forms as furnished by the grammar. In the twelfth verse the verb in the second clause is peculiar. It is a Puhal. The Kal means to *dig*. The Puhal seems a kind of causative passive. No other form seems to give sense in Psalm sixty-fourth (v. 6). "When the wicked rise, a man is hidden" (E. V.) is a clause of no very settled sense. But, "When the wicked rise, a man is made to dig,"—is very significant. The rising of the wicked is a great mystery. The rising of the righteous (first clause) is easily understood. So managed, the text becomes complete. "In the exulting of the righteous there is great beauty ; but by the rising of the wicked men are made to dig." Then, in the twenty-eighth verse, another verb is substituted,—viz., "men are veiled," meaning,—men are *perplexed* or *puzzled* ; the statement being that, when the righteous prosper, it is all clear and right ; but, when the wicked prosper, it is no doubt all right, too ; but men have to *search* and be *perplexed*.

XIII.—CHAP. xxix : 18.

- 18** Through there being no vision a people are let free ; but blessed is he who observes a direction. | ¹⁸ Where there is no vision, the people perish : but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

"Where there is no vision the people perish" (E. V.). That seems like an important Proverb. As meaning, that where the gospel is not distinctly preached, the people are children of perdition ; it is no doubt true and very important. But if we screw the whole sentence up, and make it rigid, as certainly we ought to do, its whole soundness would instantly disappear. "Vision," understood in its widest sense would include all vision. All vision kept from the soul would leave it not only uncondemned, but absolutely free. This would be the opposite idea to the English Version. When we trace the original verb, it does not mean to *perish* (E. V.) ; it does not mean,—"*it is made naked*," as appears in the margin (E. V.) ; but it means to *let go loose* : in the Niphal to be *let loose*, or to be *set free*. Simply a primary, therefore, gives a sense that we can seize upon at once. It changes all the passage. It reverses the English Version. And it gives a capital sense. "By there being no vision a people are set free ; but he that watches a direction, happy is he."*

Now another primary :—

XIV.—CHAP. xxx : 10.

- 10** Give not tongue service, as a servant to his master, lest He curse thee, and thou be held guilty. | ¹⁰ Accuse not a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty.

There is a common word "*tongue*" (Hebraic). There is a very uncommon verb, which may be supposed to originate it. It means to *lick* or, more nakedly, to *tongue*. It occurs but twice in the Bible. In the Psalms it is translated "*slandereth*" (Ps. 101 : 5, E. V.). Therein a fine

* This does not mean that such case is ever realized. It were impossible. An intelligence with no intelligence,—what would that be? But, *quod hoc* light makes our only responsibility. No light, no sin ; and no sin, no punishment. And yet Solomon teaches that if such a thing were possible, still having the light, and patiently observing it, is to be preferred as infinitely better.

sentence is spoiled. Trying our fertile expedient of supposing a more germinal sense to be retained, we have,—“he that tongues,” that is, “he that uses his tongue;” and not necessarily slanderously, or flatteringly, or in any other single way at all. There has been averred a *yodh paragogic*. We desry instead a suffix. And thus equipped, we come to this sense:—“He that tongues me;” that is, “He that does me a mere tongue service.” The Psalm is Messianic. “He that tongues me, in secret, as his friend, him will I cut off;” the meaning being, that that light-appearing crime, a mere tongue service,—is one that the Messiah will foredoom as of the head-tide of all that is corrupt; and as an inception for every wickedness. Such precisely is the repetition here. “Tongue not, as a servant his master.” The implication is, that it is at the head of a decline. A family begins by tonguing God. It is a terrible text. It is so graphic as a commencement of degeneracy. A family falls into tongue-offerings of prayer and piety. The Wise Man wishes to mark it as at the inception of decay. In one generation (v. 11) the children are loose from such control. In two generations (v. 12) they are loose from any. In three (v. 13) they are utterly proud and worldly. In four (v. 14) they are utterly malicious. The whole gives a terrible warning of that commonest of all mistakes, a habit of mere tongue or babbling devotion.

In another text, a word often connected with barrenness (Gen. 16:2) occurs suddenly in its mere primary sense, and furnishes us another instance:—

XV.—CHAP. XXX : 16.

- 16 Sheol ; and the enclosure of the womb ;
the earth, which has never filled with water ;
and fire, which has never said,—Enough. | 16 The grave ; and the bar-
ren womb ; the earth that is
not filled with water ; and the
fire that saith not, It is
enough.

Again, in the same chapter, the *locusts* (v. 16) require a primary meaning in the verb, and, failing of it (E. V.), make no show as an emblem:—

XVI.—CHAP. XXX : 27.

- 27 There is no king for the locust, | 27 The locusts have no
yet he goes forth making fair division of all. | king, yet go they forth all of
them by bands ;

The point is their harmony. The verb means to *divide*. The wonder is, that such rapacious things divide. They sweep into a line like a mowing machine, and cut, each one before him. They illustrate the harmony of the saints when they be such sinners. The more artificial sense (E. V.) states a false thing in nature, and, moreover, no true thing in grace. By its baldest germ the verb satisfies the emblem, while all the scholars are wandering off after some distant sense.

So in one more case:—

XVII.—CHAP. XXXI : 8.

- 8 Open thy mouth for the dumb man, | 8 Open thy mouth for the
to plead the cause of all the children of a | dumb in the cause of all such
change. | as are appointed to destruc-
tion.

“Open thy mouth for the dumb!” This is a direct appeal to Christ to work as our Mediator. We are dumb. Let him speak. But for whom is He to speak? Undoubtedly for all; but, in a much more special sense, for His peculiar people. Who are His peculiar people? Not, “All the sons of affliction” (E. V., margin); nor, all “such as are appointed to destruction” (E. V.); but, from this stumbling search, those

that would be uncovered by coming simply to the root. The root means to change. The infinitive would be, a changing or "a change." "Children," in such a connection, would mean, "children of a change." And "children of a change" is of all other Hebrewisms a term for saints. By simply descending toward the root we arrive gradatim at a gospel explanation.

Our cases multiply, however; and, to give variety, we will let this stand for the miscellaneous group, and class together words that occur more than once as unnoticed primaries.

CLASS XXX.

UNNOTICED CASES

OF

אָשֵׁנָה (TO MISS)

IN ITS

PRIMARY MEANING.

The commonest word for sinning means originally, to miss (either a mark, or a step in walking). The Inspired Writers sometimes suddenly return, and intend this original sense; and their intention has passed unnoticed. A fine instance of this return, one or two scholars have found in Prov. 8:36. "Whoso findeth me" (E. V.) has been the expression of the previous verse. "Whoso misses me" would neatly balance it. "He that sinneth against me" (E. V.) has, therefore, been condemned. De Wette and other scholars have detected the more obsolete sense. So in Prov. 19:2. See Maurer. The thought is not, "He that hasteth with his foot sinneth" (E. V.); but, He that is hasty with his foot misses, or trips.

In other cases the concealment has continued:—

I.—CHAP. xx:2.

- 2 The roar as of a young lion is the terrible-
ness of a king.
He that throws himself upon him, loses his life.
- ² The fear of a king is as
the roaring of a lion; whoso
provoketh him to anger sin-
eth against his own soul.

Not "whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul" (E. V.); but "whoso provokes (or pushes himself upon) him, misses his own soul," or loses it. The other translation is not only less express, but the English "against" is not very well supplied by the nature of the Hebrew.

II.—CHAP. xiv:21.

- 21 He who despises his neighbor, blunders;
but he who pities the poor, blessed is he!
- ²¹ He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.

If "misses" were a forced translation, we would not think this rendering probable; but recollect,—"misses" is the original sense; misses was before the eye of the Jew as the word's real meaning. Moreover, the translation sins could hardly have been at all exclusive in Solomon's

time ; for, as translated "sinneth" in the English Version, it occurs but four times in this Book, and those four cases have all now been noticed in the few preceding sentences (8:36; 14:21; 19:2; 20:2). "He that despises his neighbor misses," i. e., makes a mistake, or defeats his whole aim in life ; a meaning in itself more rich than the other, and more in accordance with the second clause ; which does not say,—He that hath mercy on the poor, *does right* ; but (more the reverse of *missing*)—"He that hath mercy on the poor, *happy is he*."

CLASS XXXI.

UNNOTICED CASES

or

עֲבָר (TO MOVE UP)

IN ITS

PRIMARY MEANING.

The better comment, perhaps, would be, that this word never does mean *pass by*, with the directness in which it so often appears in our English Version. It means to *pass up*, or *rush up*, as waves, or as soldiers storming a garrison. If a "way" is mentioned, it is not so much a passing *by* it, *quaad* a dweller at its side, as a passing over or through it, *quaad* a man one would overtake. Cases that we quote, will not only be where the whole primary idea has been overlaid by what is secondary, but where this idea of *up to*, instead of *by*, will make a discriminate and important difference.

I.—CHAP. XXVI : 17.

- 17 He takes a dog by the ears,
who, going up, gets himself roused about a | 17 He that passeth by, and
quarrel not his own. | meddleth with strife belonging
not to him, is like one
that taketh a dog by the ears.

Not "he that passeth by" (E. V.), but "he that passes up ;" he who sees the commotion and pushes in. So in Ps. 48:4. Not,—"The Kings passed by together," but "passed up ;" *passing by* would have been nothing formidable. Isaiah says,—"He shall overflow and go over" (Is. 8:8) ; not meaning by this last word, *passing*, but *rushing up*, as the waters of a "river strong and many" (v. 7). This thought of *rushing up* is often neglected for some weak derivative.

For example :—

II.—CHAP. XXI : 24.

- 24 Proud, haughty, scornful is his name,
who acts with the headlong gait of pride. | 24 Proud and haughty
scorner is his name who deal-
eth in proud wrath.

"Wrath" is but a rare occurrence. A rushing along heedlessly is the very essence of impenitency. It is this that the Wise Man marks as "proud" and "scornful." A sinner could not rush on to judgment, unless he had contempt of God, and confidence in self, that may be set down as proud and scornful.

So our remaining case :—

III.—CHAP. xxii : 8.

8 He that sows iniquity, reaps worthlessness ; | 8 He that soweth iniquity
and the rod of his career shall fail. | shall reap vanity ; and the
rod of his anger shall fail.

A bold push is an element of worldly success. The "rod" of such boldness is its sceptre, or the control it gets over worldly affairs. The "rod of [one's] anger" (E. V.) is nearly meaningless. The "rod of [one's] career" means, the sceptre of his energy, the kingship of his headlong zeal. The Proverb means that success must be righteous; and, however grandly the impenitent may rush along his work, yet its sceptre must necessarily be broken, and the sower of iniquity reap what shall be utterly in vain.

CLASS XXXII.

UNNOTICED CASES

OF

דָבָר (TO LEVEL)

IN ITS

PRIMARY MEANING.

There is another word that has the idea of *levelness*. In its Kal it means to be *level*; in its derivatives, *level* and *levelness*. As a metaphor it came to be applied to virtue; as we begin to speak of *level* as applied to the head, and meaning intelligence. It grew to mean to be *upright* so commonly, that it lost, except to Hebrews, the idea of *being level*, and our many versions suffer for lack of that balanced emblem which verses show if the original is retained. For example: (4:11), "I have directed thee in the way of wisdom; I have guided thee in level paths," is more metaphorically a unit than—"I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths" (E. V.); a superiority which is the more striking, because the *levelness* answers in the next verse (v. 12) to the idea of never stumbling. Of course the beauty is robbed when any version hazes over all the edges of the figure. The eighth verse of the eighth chapter, speaking of there being nothing "twisted or crooked" in the words of wisdom, makes it more expressive in the ninth to say,—"They are all plain to him that can give a meaning, and *level* to them that find knowledge." Chap. 21, verse 8, quite turns round, and ruins its meaning (E. V.), by not noticing the primary ideas. "The way of man is froward and strange; but as for the pure his work is right" (E. V.). Think how inconceivable the jumble! The first clause is untrue. The second clause is a truism. Both clauses are dead to any connection, and blind to any unitary type. Go back simply to the Hebrew primaries. Twisting about is said always to put a man further off, and piety to cause him not to twist, but to go on straight or level. "A level walker beats his path," i. e., makes it firm or hard. It would seem almost impossible to bury all semblance of this in the twenty-ninth verse. In other books of inspiration a vigilant watch of this word as meaning to be *level* before it was so universally used for *uprightness*, will give freshness and point to many an intimation.

ion. To *level*, בָּשַׂם, however, a transitive and very different word, has been the subject of graver error; for mistake here, not only hides a figure, but substitutes another, which quite upsets the text. To *level*, בָּשַׂם, has been thought to mean, to *weigh* (Ps. 58 : 2),* as balances are *levelled* in order to effect their use. But this secondary meaning has strangely tripped up the original, and in many Scriptures quite destroyed the sense. How incongruous to *ponder a way*! How natural to *level one*. And yet the bad figure has stolen the place of the good; and the secondary, quite hid the primary:—

I.—CHAP. V : 6.

- 6 Lest she should lay smooth the path of life,
her tracks are shifting. She does not get to | 6 Lest thou shouldest pon-
der the path of life, her ways
are moveable, that thou canst
not know them.

The false idiom has stolen into our very English; though, as an eye fits itself to a stereoscope, and gets the picture straight, even though the glass is crooked, we seize upon the word to *ponder*, and make English of it, even though weighing a path is quite out of the reach of being conceived.

II.—CHAP. V : 21.

- 21 For directly in God's sight are the ways of a | 21 For the ways of man are
man; before the eyes of the LORD,
and all his paths He levels down. and he pondereth all his go-
ings.

Gesenius straightens a third case (4 : 26). So does De Wette. But the two cases above, no one seems to have set right. If this (4 : 26), as given by De Wette, means, "Make level the path of thy feet," how possibly can we deny it to the other? That God *ponders* (5 : 21) the path of our feet sounds well, but is a very queer emblem. That he *levels* our path is very familiar in case of the saints; but in case of the wicked, as the next verse explains it, is a very fresh thought. He does not hedge a man when he begins to sin; but helps him in all those un-moral ways in which he gives him life and energy (see 29 : 13). He gives taste to the drunkard, and rapture to the debauchee; talent to the victim of ambition, and sharpness to the avaricious soul; and in all these ways levels their path of life; and that often with special Providences beside, that facilitate their greedy labors. This word to *ponder*, therefore, should have been kept, in these two cases at least, to its original significance.

* We very much doubt whether it ever does. It occurs but half-a-dozen times in the Bible. Ps. 58 : 2 is not really conclusive. And though the noun בָּשַׂם certainly means a *balance* (16 : 11), we doubt whether the verb ever means, to *weigh*. Let the reader search every case:—Ps. 58 : 2; 78 : 50; Prov. 4 : 26; 5 : 6, 21; Is. 26 : 7. These are all of them.

CLASS XXXIII.

UNNOTICED CASES

OF

בָּנֶה (TO DEVISE)

IN ITS

PRIMARY MEANING.

Here the more artificial usage is more imagined than real. When Gesenius says that to *sin* or to *devise in a bad sense* is the more frequent significance, he does indeed agree with all the versions, but not with the abounding evidence of use, as in previous expressions. There are one or two cases where *bad device* seems to be implied (Ps. 37:12); but it is exceedingly rare that the badness may not be left to be inferred, and the bare *designing*, as the meaning of the verb, may not be sufficient in the passage.

I.—CHAP. X : 23.

- 23 As a jest to a fool is the execution of a pur- | ²³ It is as sport to a fool to
pose; do mischief; but a man of un-
but it is wisdom to a discerning man. | derstanding hath wisdom.

The text is a fine instance of the headlong character of these presumptions. All scholars have been deceived. The verb certainly means originally to *plan*. It perhaps may mean sometimes to *plan evil* (Lev. 18:17). With a proclivity to the less original sense these cases have been multiplied, till they have become the preferred understanding of the expression. Men are then prepared to seize it as the more likely use, and not to have, strongly suggested, anything else even in the more difficult texts. Hence, though wisdom's *being sport* to a man is but a poor expression for its being pleasant, this has been the thought conceived (see Maurer, Zockler, etc.). "The doing of mischief is as sport to a fool ; and wisdom (is as sport) to the discerning man." Displace now the secondary idea, and, instead of a bad plan or mischief, let the main word return to its bare sense as a plan or a purpose, and a better order and a much better sense at once supervene :—"As laughter to a fool, is the carrying out of a purpose ; but, wisdom to a discerning man." That is ;—Life work is a jest to the impenitent, but all that is wise, to a believer. To one, life plans are trifles ; to the other, eternal blessednesses.

II.—CHAP. XXIV : 8, 9.

- 8 Though he thinks to do evil, | ⁸ He that deviseth to do
men might call him a very master of devices. | evil shall be called a mischievous person.
9 The design of folly is the Sin-Offering; | ⁹ The thought of foolish-
and the abomination, in the case of man, is | ness is sin; and the scorner
the scorner. | is an abomination to men.

This is a grand unriddling. If it is right, it is a most pregnant case ; for it not only takes two cases of this misunderstood word, and transfers them from the wrong side to the right (making the difference of four) ; but it greatly signalizes the importance of so doing. Under the head of the Sin Offering (Class XLIII.) we will say most in respect to these texts :

but we will view them here under the light of these primaries. If *designing*, in Hebrew, means sinister designing about as often as it does in English; and if also it has transitive and intransitive use, subjected to the play of the same liberty to judge,—then there can be no doubt about either of these texts. Verse seventh means,—“Wisdoms that concern the fool are perfect jewels, though he opens not his mouth in the gate.” Then, further, verse eighth:—“Planning to do evil, he shall be called a perfect master of plans;” meaning,—The fool, viz., an impenitent man, though he opens not his mouth in the gate; that is, though he is incontestably a fool,—has a wisdom concerned about him, meaning the gospel, which is a perfect jewel in its forth-issuing light. Though he thinks to do evil, he shall be made the instrument of splendid benefit; like Judas, thinking to do evil, but made a perfect master of devices, because filling a part, and with wicked hands acting in the Lord’s atonement. With the primary meaning of the words no other sense can come out. Now finish with the ninth verse,—“The design or purpose of foolishness is the Sin-Offering;” making “*design*” this time intransitive; and we have a grand entry of some of the profoundest doctrines of Christ, and in the midst of Proverbs where we have looked for no such revelations.

III.—CHAP. xxi : 27.

- 27** The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination;²⁷ The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it because, also, he brings it for a calculated purpose.

“Wickedness” (E. V., *marg.*), if ever meant by this word, might seem to be its meaning here; and yet, logically, it cannot be; as we learn when we reflect closely. A certain thing is a sin; how much more when we bring it with a wicked mind. Now, pray,—how can it be a sin at all, unless we bring it with a wicked mind? Throw out that extreme word “wickedness;” and just say “purpose,” as the primary sense; and, instead of “how much more” (E. V.), say,—“because also” (see Class XLIV.),—and the whole settles toward its natural sense. “The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination;” this, on general principles, because he is wicked; and because, out of Christ, nothing is acceptable; but then, “because also” he brings it *with a purpose*; that is, not out of service to God, but out of scheming guard for his own salvation.

CLASS XXXIV.

UNNOTICED CASES

OF

אָזֵב (TO BE EXCITED)

IN ITS

PRIMARY MEANING.

This verb means, to *be red*, in its absolute sense. Its first straying off into the abstract would naturally be toward that which makes a man *red*, or *excitement* of any kind. The word often seemed to imply *jealousy*; and, therefore, far too often was rendered *jealousy*, from this tendency to a se-

secondary sense. Most legitimately it means, to *be excited*; and the cases we shall mention are those that have lost sight of that, and where we have been robbed of the Scripture by burying it under this secondary signification:—

I.—CHAP. xxiii : 17.

- 17 Let not thine heart be aglow in sins,
but in the fear of Jehovah all the day.

| 17 Let not thine heart envy
sinners; but be thou in the
fear of the Lord all the day
long.

In the first place, the words, "Be thou" (in Italics, E. V.), are not in the text. In the second place, there is a preposition before "sinners." In the third place, "sinners" answers to a Hebrew not impossibly translated "sins." In the fourth place, the first clause, English Version, has no bold aggressive meaning; and in the fifth place, the second clause has less. Now, put "be excited" instead of "envy" (E. V.); give a sense to the preposition; and put "sins" instead of "sinners;" and we have this very significant advice:—"Let not thine heart be excited in sins;" i. e., let not that warm glow which is natural to the human heart; which reddens the face in our pursuits; and which is such an element of success and power: let not that red excitement be on fire in sins; but in the fear of Jehovah all the day.

II.—CHAP. xxiv : 1.

- 1 Do not thou get excited about evil men;
and desire not to be with them.

| 1 Be not thou envious
against evil men, neither de-
sire to be with them:

We may be envious of evil men, or jealous of them, or emulous, or all three combined. Or we may *be excited* about them in all possible ways. What conceivable genius can direct us which to say? The word says all. Is it not safe to see the word as the Hebrews saw it? "Do not thou grow red about the wicked." Do not desire to be with them. Do not excite your thoughts about their success, or blazon your unbelief. For, as the next verse expresses it,—Their heart mutters destruction. Their very thoughts tell where they are going. Their very souls are set for ruin. And to grow excited about their wealth, is to deny the revelation of Heaven, and to doubt all the facts that are fixed by the Almighty.

III.—CHAP. xxiv : 19.

- 19 Be not angry against evil doers;
be not excited about the wicked;

| 19 Fret not thyself because
of evil men, neither be thou
envious at the wicked:

CLASS XXXV.

UNNOTICED CASES

OR

נִזְרָק (TO BE STRAIGHT)

IN ITS

PRIMARY SENSE.

This is a word which has lost its primary meaning very improperly. It was a free enough translation to render it, to *go straight*: but in the

English Version the tendency has been to cast off the idea of straightness altogether, and in this way to miss, in important cases, the whole point of the passage :—

I.—CHAP. ix : 6.

- 6 Forsake the simple and live ;
and go straight in the way of discernment. | 6 Forsake the foolish, and
live ; and go in the way of
understanding.

Why commentators have not been more rigid with the word, we cannot understand. To pack a Proverb is a great point. And, certainly, that going in the way of wisdom is, *ipso facto*, going straight, is too seriously an intentional thought to be dropped from the meaning of the Spirit. In the fifteenth verse this has been observed. The English Version reads,—“that go right;” and Zöckler,—“that go straight;” the implication being, that man, let alone by “Folly,” would find it simplest to go straight; and, therefore, may be counted on as having been aiming to do so, when he was assailed by her seduction.

This thought is turned skilfully in another passage :—

II.—CHAP. iv : 14, 15.

- 14 Enter not by the path of the wicked ;
and do not attempt straight guidance by the | 14 Enter not into the path
way of evil men. | of the wicked, and go not in
15 Let that go ; do not get on by that ; | 15 Avoid it, pass not by it,
turn off of it ; and pass on. | turn from it, and pass away.

All men are professing to go straight. No man dreams of walking crooked purposely; not even a drunkard. So, religiously, we are warned not to go straight in the way of evil men. That is, not to attempt to. Even in the Pihel, the translations do not insist upon this idea of straightness :—

III.—CHAP. xxiii : 19.

- 19 Hear for thyself, my son, and be wise ;
and direct thine own heart into the way. | 19 Hear thou, my son, and
be wise, and guide thine heart
in the way.

They do indeed say, “guide” (E. V.); and Zöckler speaks of “a right way.” But the picturesqueness of all versions would be beautifully increased, if the first meanings were availed of, and the sentences wore that clean-cut look that the original trope would immediately give them.

CLASS XXXVI.

UNNOTICED CASES

OF

שְׁבָדֵל (SOMETHING STABLE)

IN ITS

PRIMARY SENSE.

Here the original seems to be given nowhere. The lexicographers state the primary thought, but translations have quite forsaken it. The result is, a dazing of the sense. Interpreting with a much commoner

term,—“sound wisdom” (E. V.) for example, they crowd the Proverbs with words like that, and they work a double mischief;—(1) they weary the reader with commoner thoughts, or with ideas already often enough expressed; and (2) they impair the writing by smothering a sense needful for a full-orbed revelation. These are unconscious acts, culpable, if careless, and terribly guilty if they could be impeached as being wilful. They are wilful thus far:—We have not yet studied the solemnities of exegesis. He who unburies a Scripture, does the work over again of the writer who was inspired, in that he gives for the first time to his church, what is to them an additional revelation.

I.—CHAP. ii : 7.

- 7 and he stores up something stable for the upright, a buckler to them of sound behavior.

⁷ He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.

The root means, to stand. Fuerst makes it, to be, to exist. A special derivative is **שׁוֹרֵךְ**, which means, there is. We find hardly the first spark of a meaning like “wisdom” (E. V.), or “counsel” (*Gesenius*). Nor do we need it. *Something to stand*, “something stable,” is what the soul hungers for. The Proverbs would hardly be complete without it. This text is like one that was revealed to Abraham (Gen. 15:1), “I am thy shield;” that, here, is the “buckler” of the second clause; and then, “something stable;” “I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” No passage, however, but supplants all this in the English Version by the more indifferent idea of “counsel” or “wisdom”:—

II.—CHAP. iii : 21.

- 21 My son, suffer not to pass from thine eyes, watch, what is stable and well-considered;

²¹ My son, let them not depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion.

III.—CHAP. viii : 14.

- 14 Counsel is mine, and something stable. I am discernment. I have strength.

¹⁴ Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength.

IV.—CHAP. xviii : 1.

- 1 The aims of a man left to himself are at the mere dictate of desire; against everything stable he lets himself roll along.

¹ Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom.

This last we attack more summarily. Every part of it must be made new. The supremeness of the change might shock the reader, were it not for the plainness of the Hebrew. “According to desire;” that is, at the beck of mere taste; “a separated man;” that is, a selfish one; “pursues;” or “has his pursuit;” “against everything stable, he pushes himself;” that is, he rolls himself along. This is quite faithful to the Hebrew; and quite awakening and vitalizing to the thought, thus suggested, through all the context.

Primary meanings that are to be revived, give place now to instances that are just the opposite:—

CLASS XXXVII.

UNNOTICED CASES

OF

SECONDARY MEANING.

The tendency on the whole is, to forget the primary ; but there are cases where everybody has overlooked a secondary :—

I.—CHAP. XV : 7.

- 7 The lips of the wise winnow knowledge ;
but the heart of the stupid is not fixed.

7 The lips of the wise disperse knowledge ; but the heart of the foolish doeth not so.

The verb to scatter or disperse (E. V.) grew to mean to *winnow* or *sift*, from the scattering to which they subjected grain. This secondary meaning has been lost sight of where it would have unravelled everything. "The lips of the wise scatter knowledge" (E. V.). What does that mean other than that they are wise lips? "The lips of the wise winnow knowledge" would be a much more advanced and superior idea. Not only does the heart do so, but the very lips. They have the habit of letting the wheat pass through, and of letting the chaff of folly stay behind, and be denied an utterance. And then (most striking thought!) the incapacity for all this of the "foolish man" appears in the second clause ; in that the heart, aback of this winnowing power, is not even "fixed ;" and therefore, is in no state conceivable to decide between what is chaff and what is wheat.

This *winnowing* idea is grander still in another Scripture :—

II.—CHAP. XX : 8.

- 8 The king that sits upon the throne of judgment
winnows all evil with his eyes.

8 A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes.

Maurer and Zöckler have both come very near the right thought ; and Zöckler has quite embraced it, in chap. 20 : 26 ; but all the more behaves strangely by failing of it as it occurs in the present text. Zöckler translates, "searches ;" and Maurer, "ventilates" (which he expounds by the word *secernit*) ; and it is only in the twenty-sixth verse ; and there, only Zöckler,—that we are helped directly to the sense of *sift* or *winnow*.

The word *call* will give us another case :—

III.—CHAP. XVIII : 6.

- 6 The lips of a stupid man come into a quarrel ;
and it is his mouth that gives a name to blows.

6 A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.

From the idea that a man *calls out* a name when he bestows it, *calling* grew to mean *naming* ; just as it does among ourselves. *Calling*, therefore, was the primary, and *naming* the secondary. Now there are two cases, at least, where the secondary is not thought of, but yet where it would quite unfold the sense. Men name that malice often which was really not so intended. Fools, the Wise Man tells us, are very apt to enter into

quarrels ; and it is their mouth that gives a name to blows. We can never be sure that blows were meant as blows, when fools say so. They are apt to misconstrue injuries ; or to say those were blows, which were dealt with quite another idea. The Proverb is aiming evidently at our treatment of the Almighty.

The other is a more perplexed case :—

IV.—CHAP. xx : 6.

- 6 Much of the mere man one calls his goodness ;
but a faithful man, who can find ?

6 Most men will proclaim
every one his own goodness :
but a faithful man who can
find ?

We doubt whether *call* (Hebraice) ever means *promulge*, in our English sense. It certainly does mean to *name*. "Much that is merely human a man will call his goodness" (see treatment under Class VII.). This is a grand meaning. "Much of man ;" that is, much of the mere man,—a man will self-righteously applaud, and give the name to as of his real goodness ; but a faithful man ; that is, a man of genuine real worth,—Solomon inquires,—who can find ?

There are two more cases ; and they are to be found in the twenty-fourth chapter :—

V.—CHAP. xxiv : 7.

- 7 The wisdoms attaching to a fool are perfect jewels ;
though he opens not his mouth in the gate.

7 Wisdom is too high for a
fool ; he openeth not his
mouth in the gate.

A most artificial sense of "high" (E. V.), and, that, as a plural adjective, came to be, "*jewels*." The Versionists translate "*coral*" (Job 28 : 18) : we are not sure for what reason. A man might speak of his "high things," and, finally, the name settle upon "jewels," as, in that nomadic region, the highest. There can be no doubt about the use. In just one case, and that this Proverb, all versions return to the primary idea. How unhappy ! It destroys a Messianic text. Of all *high things*, Christ, as the cream of revelation, is, of course, the highest. The cross is, above all other things, the jewel of the Divinest ray. Though it be "wisdoms that concern the fool ;" yet not on that account is it a whit the less beautiful. "Wisdom is too high for a fool," which is the form of the English Version, is the sturkest truism. "The wisdoms that concern a fool are jewels," becomes a grand speech ; for really, the Songs of Light (Rev. 7 : 12) will be loaded down with this very paradox of triumph.

Sometimes the secondary is the out-birth of the form. The Hithpahel turns the simple Kal, to *walk*, into the reflexive, to *walk one's self*, or to go sauntering for pleasure. This is often not noticed in the Proverbs :—

VI.—CHAP. xxiv : 34.

- 34 and thy poverty, sauntering along, has entered ;
and thy want, as a bucklered man.

34 So shall thy poverty
come as one that travelleth ;
and thy want as an armed
man.

The two clauses are not meant to be alike. The first clause makes ruin come saunteringly, like a boat playing upon the rapids ; not with the front of one bent on coming, but strolling nearer, as if for pleasure. The other intends another form of stealing up ; viz., of the army behind the hill ; or the array not yet come within our vision. Both mean to imply that, doom like, they will be here ; and, though perpetually coming, they will spring at last as though in wild surprise.

CLASS XXXVIII.

OVERLOOKED FORCE

OF

אָנֹכִי (IF NOT).

As a form of oath, "*if not*" was not originally a beginning. It required a preface. "God do so to me (2 Sam. 19:13) if I return not, etc." "God destroy me, if I give thee not." In the haste of speech, the known beginning came to be left off; and "*if not*" thus erected itself into a form of imprecation. We get angry at a man, and have a faint blush of this, even in English. We start from our seat, and say, 'If I don't think the fellow means to kill me!' Or we go at him with a club, and say,—'If I won't knock you down!' Such undoubted Hebraism has been unnoticed where it would be a key to everything:—

I.—CHAP. iii : 30.

- 30 Thou shalt not quarrel with a man to no purpose ; verily, he has already done thee mischief.

³⁰ Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm.

With a plain "*if not*," the sentence is most insipid. As King James' people translate it, it is tautology. What is the difference between "without cause," and, "if he has done thee no harm?" Or translating,—"without purpose;" which is the unquestionable sense; it breeds something worse than tautologous; for it seems to imply, that if a man *has* done us harm, we may go for him whether to no good purpose or no. The sentence is never relieved, till the first clause is shut in upon itself, and the second clause is read as that form of oath which betokens a grand assurance. "Strive not with a man to no purpose." That is a precept by itself. Whether he have injured thee or no, attempt no law suit, and utter no damaging complaints, except for good. Unless a high purpose lead thee, keep away from strife. Break out into even a just dispute, if there be no need for it, and rest assured (as the "*if not*" idiomatically would say) the man has a second time worked thee most serious mischief.

Again a harder case:—

II.—CHAP. 4 : 16.

- 16 For the mere reason that they sleep not, rest assured they do mischief, and that their sleep is stolen, rest assured they occasion stumbling.

¹⁶ For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.

"They sleep not except they have done mischief" (E. V.) would be the character of men desperately evil. But the Inspired Solomon has been speaking of men in whose way we might think we were going straight (see v. 14 and Class XXXV.). Then they are not desperate characters, but, on the contrary, are merely graceless. Solomon is teaching that they must travel downward. He says,—Their growth is in that direction. "They feed on food of wickedness, and drink wine of wrongs." They cannot live without declension. They cannot act without depraving. And so, the more they act, that is, the more "they sleep not, rest assured

(literally, "if not") "they do mischief;" and the more "their sleep is stolen, rest assured (literally, "if not") they occasion stumbling." There are two instances, it will be noticed, in the same verse. And these peculiarities of unobserved significance will answer, not simply for unriddling the Proverbs, but for several other darker puzzles to be found in other Scriptures.

CLASS XXXIX.

OVERLOOKED FORCE

OF **נָ** AS A

PREFIX TO NOUNS.

The general influence of **נָ** is to indicate *place* in the meaning of nouns. From **אָכְלָ**, to *feed*, comes **מִאָכְלָ**, a *place* for food, or *granary*. From **אַיִלָּ**, *light*, **מִאַיִלָּ**, a *cause* or *place* for light; i. e., a luminary. From **אַזְרָ**, to *lie in wait*, comes **מִאַזְרָ**, a *place* for lying in wait; i. e., an *ambush*. So, unnumbered substantives. Now the overlooking of this in certain puzzling texts, has, to this very date in exegesis, hid their meaning. For example:—

I.—CHAP. iv : 23.

- 23 More than any guard-post keep watch over 23 Keep thy heart with all
diligence: for out of it are
the issues of life.
thine heart;
for out of it are the outgoings of life.

This text has been seen to be important, but has been wonderfully dragged about. The older meaning was,—“Keep thy heart with all keeping;” like “dying thou shalt die.” This led to the English Version, —“Keep thy heart with all diligence.” The preposition **נָ**, however, moved many into a thought of a comparative,—“Keep thy heart more than any [other] keeping;” when really, the **נָ**, as denoting place, would have given the true hint, and would have relieved every question. The verb is **מִרְשָׁ**, to *guard*. The noun is **מִשְׁמָרָ**, a *place* of *guard*, or a *guard-place* (Num. 15 : 34). Strange, therefore, that this never should have been suggested. “Words” had been spoken of in the twenty-second verse; and it had been said that they would be “health to all [the] flesh.” This picture of life as reigning in the body, and as traceable through the blood to the heart, seems to point out that central citadel. If the heart is kept right, all other diseases are warded off. A grand way to keep the outposts is to keep the heart. Hence the exact figure; —“Guard thy heart more than any (other) guard-post; for out of it are the outgoings of life.”

II.—CHAP. iv : 26.

- 26 Make smooth the planting-place of thy foot; 26 Ponder the path of thy
feet, and let all thy ways be
established.
and all thy ways shall be established firmly.

עֲגַלְ means, to *revolve*; **עֲגַלְתָה** means, a *wagon*, whose wheels *revolve*; and **מֵעֲגַלְ**, a *place* to *revolve in*, as a *track* or *rut*. By recollecting this, we get a meaning for several passages, among the rest for this; which

we are to read, not,—“Level (see Class XXXII.) the *path* of thy feet” but something more definite. We are not to send our minds over a whole journey-way; but we are to read thus,—“Level the *planting-place* of thy foot;” i. e., each track or foot-fall,—and all thy way shall be established firmly.” Each act guarded, guards beforehand the whole character. It is a plea for each step; and so the whole journey will be gradually assured.

Ground is, perhaps, a better word, where the thought becomes more abstract. We say, not a “place of quarrel,” but a “ground for quarrel.” Hence these substantives with **נָשָׁר** prefixed, mean “cause” often, instead of place:—

III.—CHAP. vi : 19.

- 19 a deceived witness whose breath is lies ; | 19 A false witness *that*
and he that puts grounds of quarrel among | speaketh lies, and him that
brethren. | soweth discord among brethren.

Stirring a quarrel and stirring a cause of quarrel may seem the one idea. So they are in a great majority of cases. The lexicons, therefore, have not noticed any difference. These filaments of language are dangerous things to be cut out, however; for sometimes they assert the discrepancy. Stirring a quarrel and stirring the cause of one are different in this,—that the cause may have existed already, and the fault of the man may be only that he stirs it. This fault may be brought home, therefore, when the other contradicts his consciousness. It gives finer renderings when these delicate edges of thought are noticed and preserved.

CLASS XL.

OVERLOOKED MEANINGS

OF

נֶפֶל (SOUL).

This particular word in Hebrew has many meanings. It means *breath* (Job 41 : 21). It means *life* (1 Ki. 19 : 3). It means *soul* (1 Sam. 1 : 15). It means *appetite* (Prov. 23 : 2). Hence it means also *throat* (Is. 5 : 14). A want of alertness to detect it in its change spoils everything in certain Scriptures (Job 9 : 21).

I.—CHAP. vii : 23.

- 23 till a dart strike through his liver ; | 23 Till a dart strike through
as a bird hastens to the net, | his liver; as a bird hasteth to
and knows not that he is in its very throat. | the snare, and knoweth not
that it is for his life.

“For his life” is a bad use of the preposition, and not a very good expression. Should it not say,—“For his death?” However, the reading is so superior where we take the preposition in its natural sense as “in,” and keep down to the letter of the emblem, that our translation seems to stamp itself on its very face. The sinner is the poor bird that is hastening into the snare, and is perfectly unconscious that, at the time, he is already in its very *throat*.

The translation of *soul* as *appetite* has been sufficiently observed, espe-

cially by modern commentators. The following are signal instances (6:30; 10:3; 13:2; 23:2). The last was detected under King James. It is in the Feast with the Ruler:—"Put a knife to thy throat if thou be a man given to *appetite*" (E. V.). Two cases we will mention, however, where no one has noticed such a possibility; and where availings of it unriddles the passage:—

II.—CHAP. xxvii : 9.

- 9 Oil and incense delight the heart,
and sweetness its friend, from the dictate of
appetite.

Ointment and perfume
rejoice the heart; so doth the
sweetness of a man's friend
by hearty counsel.

III.—CHAP. xxviii : 25.

- 25 A large appetite stirs up quarrel;
but he that trusts in Jehovah is made fat.

25 He that is of a proud
heart stirreth up strife: but
he that putteth his trust in
the Lord shall be made fat.

Soul, or *life*, or *heart* (E. V.), or anything psychological, quite buries up this first Proverb. Its meaning has been quite smothered in. The idea meant to be expressed was, the *appetite* for piety. It was to resemble oil and incense. This whole passage represents sweetness as the bond of piety. It was to tie the brotherhood together as a common chain. As oil delights the taste, so will this sweetness the race of its possessors. The sensuous man and the pious man are distinctly similar. A feast to the one is like faith to the other, both dainties, and both made so by the *dictates of appetite*.

Searching the books leads us to find Umbreit almost with us in the second case (28:25). Hitzig is almost as much so. They seem to argue it, however, from the attributes of *soul*, rather than by coming to the distinct sense of appetite. The reader will examine those exegetes. Their testimony helps us, as showing how slow it seems for these plain improvements to be unearthed. The Scripture is full of such; and we have no doubt that after our own work is done, we shall have left the ground still burying up most of the beautiful, and strangely unnoticed, and perfectly grammatical, revelations. This last case needs but little comment. The "*proud heart*" (E. V.) is changed into "*a wide appetite*." And the "*wide appetite*" is said to stir up the ground of strife (see Class XXXIX): the lean Cassius being antipodes of the wise man; who is not perpetually greedy; but who, with quiet peace, trusts in Jehovah, and, on that very account of confidence, flourishes and is made fat.

CLASS XLI.

UNNOTICED MEANING

OF

~**ם** (MOUTH).

The first case that we would have put upon our list many moderns have already discovered. It is chap. 8:29. The English Version reads,—"When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment." "His commandment" is "his (or its) mouth." Modern scholars have not been slow to make the change. They read it,

—“that the waters should not pass over its mouth.” It is important to quote the passage, because it supports other unnoticed instances :—

L.—CHAP. XVI : 26.

- 26 The laboring soul labors for it ; for its mouth imposes it upon him. | 26 He that laboureth, laboureth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him.

The sense of this passage is largely cleared up by another. We find it in Eccles. (6 : 7). There the thought is brightened by an expression immediately before :—“ Do not all go to one place ? ” And, therefore, when the sentence follows,—“ All the labor of a man is for his mouth ” (E. V.), it is easier to think of the meaning “ *its* mouth ” which is the clear significance. The two sentences are perfectly parallel. “ Do not all go to one place ? All the labor of a man is for its mouth, yet its maw (see Class XL.) is not filled.” In Proverbs the “ place ” is not so distinctly mentioned ; but “ death,” a masculine, occurs just before (v. 23); and, agreeing with this, comes the pronominal suffix. “ He that laboureth. laboureth for *it*,” that is, for “ *death* ;” and “ *its* mouth,” that is, death’s mouth, just as in the former instance (Eccles.), imposeth it, as a great grim appetite, upon him.

II.—CHAP. XXI : 6.

- 6 Hedge in a child upon the mouth of his way : 6 Train up a child in the way he should go ; and when he is old, he will not depart even for the very reason that he grows old from it. he shall not depart from it.

This is a nobler and, yet, much simpler sentence. **בַּיִת** is a word of many idioms. But if we suddenly call it back to what is primary, we therein have the superior right. The sentence is expressive. C'est le premier pas qui coute. “ Hedge in a child upon the *mouth* of his way.” Get him well in there ; and he will drive comfortably afterward. “ Hedge in a child upon the *mouth* of his way. Even because he grows old, he shall not depart from it.”

CLASS XLII.

UNNOTICED MEANING

OF

בְּפָנֵי (BEFORE).

Instead of what is literal, like “ mouth ” (22 : 6), we wish to reject what is literal, and to claim, now, certain unnoticed idioms. The word *before*, under this particular Hebrew, may mean *in the opinion of*, or in anyone’s *sight* or *estimation*. “ Other Gods before me ” (Ex. 20 : 3) mean other Gods in my estimation. The Hebraism is copied into the Greek. Zacharias and Elizabeth were “ righteous before God ;” that is,—God thought them righteous. Now certain overlooked cases of this will clear up a multitude of Scriptures. For example :—

L.—CHAP. VIII : 30.

- 30 And I became a builder at His side. | 30 Then I was by him, as one brought up with him ; And I became a deep pleasure day by day ; and I was daily His delight, a joy in His sight all the time ; rejoicing always before him ;

Translate "before him" (E. V.), simply "*in His sight*," or by "*His estimate*," and the whole passage falls in place. Wisdom "became a builder at His side" (8:30); that is, holiness, in the highest sense, set God to building. Then it became a deep pleasure; not to God; for nothing could become, or come to be in Him. But it became a deep pleasure; and a deep pleasure *in His sight*; and a deep pleasure all the time: and then it tells whom it became a deep pleasure to:—(v. 31) "a joy in the habitable part of His earth; and my deep pleasures were for the sons of man." "Wisdom," therefore, was not Christ. It was not a being that could rejoice. It was not a Person disporting Himself "before" the Father; but simply a pleasant thing, in His opinion; a holiness by which all things had been builded; and a quality, which, when imparted to man, became to him, even in God's estimate, the very noblest pleasure. We adduce no other case from Solomon; but this will be a fruitful source of light, when we trace it through other revelations.

CLASS XLIII.

OVERLOOKED SENSE

OF THE

WORD סְנִינוּת (SIN-OFFERING).

We come now to, perhaps, the most important instance of unnoticed significance. The wonder is, that it should have been so long unnoticed. The sense of "sin" as "Sin Offering" was familiar to the Jews, and was read in the synagogue as a familiar interpretation. It is, perhaps, not generally known that this very word is translated "sin-offering" (E. V.) all through Leviticus. The prevailing thought, therefore, that Sin-Offering is a sort of forced translation is the very opposite of wise; inasmuch as the translation "sin," is the rare one in all the Pentateuch. And though the English Version never translates, "Sin-Offering," in all the Proverbs; and though no translator ever does; yet, why not? The usage other wheres makes no such meaning improbable. And, if the passages, under the rendering "sin," are hazy and obscure, why not experiment upon the other sense? and why not boldly introduce it in nearly all the occasions of the Hebrew? There are but seven; and five of them are *ab ictu* un-earthed by the change:—

I.—CHAP. xiii:6.

6 Righteousness keeps guard over him that is | 6 Righteousness keepeth
of integrity in his way : | *him that is upright in the*
but wickedness subverts the Sin-Offering. | *way: but wickedness over-*
throweth the sinner.

Translated "sin," the prominent word in this verse throws everything into common-place. "Wickedness overthroweth the sinner." What right have we to palm anything so vapid upon the Inspired Man? Besides, sin is not "sinner" (E. V.); and the comment that makes it so, though not impossible, is more forced than many a bolder treatment of the passage. Translate it "Sin-Offering," and it gives edge to all the rest. Righteousness is our "breast-plate." This grace, righteousness guards the man upright in his way. But the opposite of this uprightness just reverses the result. While righteousness guards the upright man, the

wicked man subverts and repels redemption. There is a tendency to think that Solomon had no such light. But why not? If we quench it where it appears, of course we may be left to think so. Did not Balaam show light? Or at any rate did he not utter truth? Which, though in his heart it might be an empty formulary, was yet a beacon-torch, lighted in that early period of time.

II.—CHAP. xiv : 34.

- 34 Righteousness lifts up a people ; | 34 Righteousness exalteth
and the mercy for nations is the Sin-Offering. | a nation : but sin is a reproach
to any people.

We are quite bold to proceed upon the supposition that such a text as the second clause (E. V.) is an impossibility. We would not arrogate rights to judge. We would not set people to smoking out commonplace. But we do aver, that there has been an idolatry of sounds, which would respect a sentence as having sense, when it would not be tolerated in human writings. In other words, there has been a lack of vigorous faith that a Proverb, from lips like these, should be remorselessly searched, before we rest satisfied with anything but the richest meaning. "Righteousness exalteth a nation" (E. V.) is a true but very common thought. Redemption lifts a whole nation up, is a very precious one. "Sin is a reproach to any people" (E. V.) is not worth saying. Moreover "reproach" is a very rare, or, as we prevailingly believe, mistaken use of the word it answers to. While on the other hand,—"The mercy for nations is the Sin-Offering," not only restores that word, but gives a sense, the great fault of which, as we have seen, is that it is too intelligent!

III.—CHAP. xxi : 4.

- 4 Elation of eyes and dilation of heart, | 4 An high look, and a proud
the very light of the wicked, is the Sin-Offer- | heart, and the plowing of the
ing. | wicked, is sin.

The last clause of the English Version is true and striking; but how odd to unite it with "a high look and a proud heart"! The striking averment is, that so innocent an act should be wicked. Make "sin" mean "Sin-Offering;" make "ploughing" mean "light," which it often does: make the earlier expressions, which are not staple ones, expressions for high elation, rather than for pride; and we have a splendid gospel! Why should not we expect it in a son like Solomon (2 Sam. 12 : 24)?—"Elation of eyes and dilation of heart; the very light of the wicked,—is the Sin-Offering."

IV.—CHAP. xxiv : 9.

- 9 The design of folly is the Sin-Offering ; | 9 The thought of foolish-
and the abomination, in the case of man, is | ness is sin ; and the scorner
the scorner. | is an abomination to men.

The English Version, if wrong, is of course of chance. If it make sense, it is accidental. In other words, the Versionists, failing of what was meant, warp into it some imagined signification. Now this could hardly but appear, if not in each clause, yet in the two. If the clauses have a racy sense, then the accident would be almost miraculous, that made them both racy and both logical. This happy miracle has certainly not befallen. "The thought of foolishness is sin" (E. V.). That is a good accident. But—"the scorner is an abomination to men;" that is a most hapless match to it. Men prejudice their piety when they treat reverently such a jumble (see 24 : 23, 24). But "sin" in the sense of

"Sin-Offering" flashes light at once; and lifts the passage into the very Towers of Meaning. "The wisdoms in respect to a fool are jewels, though he open not his mouth in the gate (see Class LV.). He that devises to do evil shall be called the very master of devisings. The design of foolishness is the Sin-Offering, and the scorner (only; that is, the man who scoffs this redemption away) is the abomination in the instance of man." This is a grand connection; and redeems into one a Babel of discordant sentences.

V.—CHAP. x : 16.

- 16 The labor of a righteous man serves as life ; | ¹⁶ The labour of the righteous tendeth to life : the fruit of the wicked to sin.

Here the sin-offering is not Christ's, but ours. Each man must bring a sin-offering. If he bring not Christ's, then there is forced from him his own. All Hell is an offering for sin. All Hell does not exhaust it. All vengeance is expiatory, and does actually satisfy justice. But it begins, and never finishes. The whole of the lost man is involved, and from the cradle on is drunk up as an award of judgment. He sins more, and, therefore, never gets paid out. The labor of the righteous accumulates life; but the fruit of the wicked, ten million of years, can be nothing but a sin-offering. This is an apt text, and bears upon that recent belief that would limit eternal punishment.

CLASS XLIV.

UNNOTICED MEANING

OF

אַךְ כִּי (BECAUSE ALSO).

For some cause or other, these words, which mean, separately, *also*, and *because*, are thought to mean, together, "much more." In cases that require it, they are thought to mean "much less." The simple words "also because," or, as idiomatically better, "because also," are in our judgment the key to many unnoticed significations :-

I.—CHAP. xi : 3x.

- 3x Behold, the man righteous on earth shall be ^{3x} Behold, the righteous recompensed ; shall be recompensed in the because also the wicked and the sinner. earth much more the wicked and the sinner.

There might seem to be no meaning in the expression,—The righteous will be rewarded, "*because also*" the wicked. But the righteous, it will be remembered, are worthy of no reward, in themselves. The wicked are rewarded from strict justice. They actually sin, and are actually punished. But the righteous are not rewarded from personal justice. They do not actually obey; and their best righteousnesses are but as filthy rags. Still, there is a budding effort that the Bible is pleased to call righteousness. It is not the righteousness of Christ, but means here one's own righteousness. It is a righteousness "on earth." It is a righteousness, imperfect, and, therefore, not strictly speaking righteousness. And yet it is a righteousness that is to be rewarded. After we

are saved by Christ, our own righteousness must grade the size of our account in heaven not as a price, but as a grade; not as the acquiring ground, but as the acquired measure; and this recompense the Scriptures speak of as a reward (Rev. 11:18); and, in this particular text, speak of it as having kindred reasons with the reward of the wicked. "He that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly." We are to receive, every one, things through the body, according to what we have done, whether it be good or evil. This text, therefore, is thoroughly intended. "Behold the righteous man in the earth shall be recompensed, because also (that is, because of many kindred effects) there are rewarded (more judicially, of course) the wicked and the sinner."

II.—CHAP. xv: 11.

- 11 Sheol and Destruction are before Jehovah, | 11 Hell and destruction are before the Lord; how much because also the hearts of the children of men. | more than the hearts of the children of men?

Hell and destruction are before Jehovah; i. e., in the exact gauge of their penalty and terror; "*because also*," what? why, those human hearts that are exactly to grade penalty and terror (see Commentary, *in loco*).

III.—CHAP. xvii: 7.

- 7 Excellent speech is not agreeable to the | 7 Excellent speech becom-
base, | eth not a fool; much less do
for the same reason also that lying speech is | lying lips a prince.
not to the noble.

"Excellent speech becometh" (E. V.) anybody, fool or noble: but it is not *agreeable to everybody*. Holiness is disagreeable to sin, for the same reason that sin is, to holiness. "*Much less*" has led all versionists astray. We plead the merit of the simple Hebrew.

IV.—CHAP. xxi: 27.

- 27 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; | 27 The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much
because, also, he brings it for a calculated | more, when he bringeth it
purpose. | with a wicked mind?

"*Because also*" dispenses with "*when*" (E. V.), which is Italic, and marks an additional reason for the rejection of the hypocrite.

V.—CHAP. xix: 10.

- 10 Delight is not suited to a stupid man; | 10 Delight is not seemly for
for the same reason also that it is not to a | a fool; much less for a ser-
servant to rule princes. | vant to have rule over princes.

We anticipate other disclosures of sense by rejecting "*much more*" in other of the obscurer Scriptures (1 Ki. 8:27; 2 Chr. 32:15).

CLASS XLV.

OVERLOOKED SENSE
OF
בַּecause (BECAUSE).

Because is the usual meaning of the word בַּcause. It seems to be the natu-

ral meaning of it. It seems to be a more frequent meaning of it than expositors, as a class, have been willing to suppose. To this fact, as unnoticed, we attribute some of the oversights that have occurred in exposition. The least distinctive instances we will quote in a body:—

I.—CHAP. ii : 10.

- 10 Because wisdom enters thy heart,
and knowledge is pleasant to thy soul.

10 When wisdom entereth
into thine heart, and know-
ledge is pleasant unto thy
soul.

II.—CHAP. iii : 25.

- 25 Be not afraid of sudden fear,
nor of the destruction of the wicked, because
it is actually coming in.

25 Be not afraid of sudden
fear, neither of the desolation
of the wicked, when it com-
eth.

III.—CHAP. iv : 8.

- 8 Exalt her, and she shall promote thee.
She shall load thee with honor because thou
dost embrace her.

8 Exalt her, and she shall
promote thee; she shall bring
thee to honour, when thou
dost embrace her.

IV.—CHAP. xix : 18.

- 18 Discipline thy son because there is now
hope;
but to kill him lift not up thy soul.

18 Chasten thy son while
there is hope, and let not thy
soul spare for his crying.

V.—CHAP. xxii : 18.

- 18 Because it is pleasant because thou dost
watch over them within thyself;
therefore they shall get fixed together upon
thy lips.

18 For it is a pleasant thing
if thou keep them within thee;
they shall withal be fitted in
thy lips.

VI.—CHAP. xxiii : 9.

- 9 In the ears of a fool thou shalt not speak ;
if there be the reason that he despise the
wisdom of thy words.

9 Speak not in the ears of a
fool; for he will despise the
wisdom of thy words.

There are cases where the distinction is vital:—

VII.—CHAP. ii : 18, 19.

- 18 Because she has sunk down to death as to
her house,
and to the shades as to her paths,
19 none that go in to her return again,
or overtake the paths of life;

18 For her house inclineth
unto death, and her paths
unto the dead.

19 None that go unto her
return again, neither take
they hold of the paths of life.

Not,—“ She forsaketh the guide of her youth ; for her house inclineth unto death ” (E. V.): for, pause a moment, and you will see no sequence. But (forward, instead of backward),—“ Because she has sunk down to death as to her house, none that go in to her shall return, etc.”

VIII.—CHAP. xxiii : 13.

- 13 Withhold not from a child correction.
That thou beatest him with a rod shall be
the reason that he shall not die.

13 Withhold not correction
from the child: for if thou
beatest him with the rod, he
shall not die.

Not,—“ If thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die ” (E. V.). That would be a poor pay for discipline. But “ *because* ” thou beatest him; that is, because thou bringest him under salutary discipline,—he shall not die spiritually. That is:—Child en, faithfully raised, shall at-

tain to everlasting life. Oddly enough, Maurer and Umbreit conceived of this meaning, and were led to reject it.

IX.—CHAP. xxiii : 22.

22 Listen to thy father, as the one that begat thee ; and for the very reason that she is old, despise not thy mother.

²² Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.

A peculiar pronoun in the first clause, and the word "because" in the last, give the relation of the parent, and the mother being old, as the actual reasons for the reverence. Why has not this been thought of? The most noticeable fact among the exegetes is, that a usage, seems to grow over a word, like a crust, which cannot be broken even to try an earlier, and more simple, meaning. It would require study; but certainly it would be worth finding out,—whether the varieties of sense are not too great in our Hebrew lexicons. Will not a higher scholarship, like a truss, hold up the viscera of sense, and make more compact the speech of revelation?

CLASS XLVI.

OVERLOOKED SENSE

OF

בֶּן־ (TO NO PURPOSE).

This word occurs twenty-nine times in the Bible. We are not sure it ever means "for no cause" (E. V.). It means *gratuitously*, sometimes; i. e., *of grace*, as its derivation indicates; but it means usually that form of gratuitousness which consists in a thing's being "*to no purpose*." It occurs six times in Proverbs. Only once it is translated "in vain" (1 : 17, E. V.) which is equivalent to this last meaning of "*to no purpose*." Once, it is translated "*without cause*" when the meaning comes near to justify it:—"Who hath wounds without cause?" (23 : 29); and even here, *gratuitous* or *useless* wounds; that is, in a certain sense, wounds "*to no purpose*,"—might possibly be imagined as sufficiently explaining the passage. Once, it is translated "*without cause*" (1 : 11, E. V.) where Maurer corrects it, and with abundant reason renders it, "*to no purpose*." Three other cases remain; and here all commentators agree with the English Version; and all comments, on this account, perplex and obscure the meaning:—

I.—CHAP. iii : 30.

30 Thou shalt not quarrel with a man to no purpose; verily, he has already done thee a mischief.

³⁰ Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm.

"*Without cause*" (E. V.) destroys the sense. Striving, for ever so good a cause, may be wicked. We are to have a "*purpose*" for striving. A man is never to quarrel till he can do it usefully.

So exactly the next case:—

II.—CHAP. xxiv : 28.

- 28 Be not a witness to no purpose against thy neighbor,
and, mayhap, deceive with thy lips.

28 Be not a witness against thy neighbor without cause ;
and deceive not with thy lips.

"To no purpose," gives a perfect meaning ; "without cause," a false one. We have no right to blacken a neighbor for ever so good a "cause." The thing needed is a "purpose." To tell the truth, if it be bitter truth, and we have no wholesome design, is wicked scandal ; and, therefore, the Proverb is very noble one, if we take the rendering which beyond a doubt suits best in nearly every Scripture.

III.—CHAP. xxvi : 2.

- 2 Like a bird, as to roaming, like a swallow as
to flight,
so a curse to no purpose does not come.

2 As the bird by wandering,
as the swallow by flying ;
so the curse causeless shall not come.

A curse without cause (E. V.) Maurer expounds as an *unmerited curse* ("exsecratio immorata"). It is not so profound a meaning ; nor indeed is it always true ; for curses do come unmerited, as on brutes for example, and on idiots. There are, then, internal evidences that this is not the sense. But a curse "to no purpose" would disgrace the Deity. "He doth not afflict willingly." The skim of a swallow means something in the mind of the bird ; and so the slenderest grief is not sent needlessly by the Almighty.

CLASS XLVII.

OVERLOOKED SENSE

OF THE

EXPRESSION, HAND TO HAND.

This expression occurs but twice in the Bible, and both times in this book of Proverbs. We are left to the mere vocables and their connection to divine the meaning.

I.—CHAP. xi : 21.

- 21 When hand to hand the wicked shall not go
unpunished :
but the seed of the righteous shall be let off.

21 Though hand join in
hand, the wicked shall not be
unpunished : but the seed of
the righteous shall be deliv-
ered.

Maurer translates, "from hand to hand;" i. e., through all generations. Zöckler translates, "assuredly," as though it were a plighted thing, hand grasping hand : our English Version, "Though hand join in hand." Never one of them remembers that we have the idiom in the West. How remarkable it is, that these texts should be discussed, and great difficulties and differences be manifested, and our own idiom never be thought of as the very best solution. Let us add the other passage :—

II.—CHAP. xvi : 5.

- 5 Every one that is proud of heart is an abom-
ination to Jehovah.

5 Every one that is proud
in heart is an abomination to
the LORD : though hand join
in hand, he shall not be un-
punished.

6 When hand to hand, he shall not go un-
punished.

Both answer perfectly to what we say in English. At present, God is fighting shyly, never grappling with iniquity; but the fight will change. The parties will be confronted finally; and, "hand to hand," the wicked shall not go unpunished.

CLASS XLVIII.

OVERLOOKED FORCE

OF THE

WORD, JUDGMENT.

It is rare that this word fits into easy English; and it is rare that we prosper when we attempt to change it. It means a *verdict*, or, let us say more widely, one's legal dues. Texts always suffer where we forget this fact:—

I.—CHAP. XII : 5.

- 5 The plans of the righteous are a judgment: | ⁵ The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.

We count the first clause (E. V.) as a sort of *fetich* of Scripture; a translation for translation's sake; an honoring of the word in that most dishonoring of ways, the honoring of a pointless exhibition. Who knows any value of the Proverb,—"The thoughts of the righteous are right (E. V.)?" But now, make the whole stricter. Make the "thoughts" (E. V.) what they really are (*Hebraice*), schemes or plans. Conceive the "righteous" as the gospel righteous; that is, as, properly considered, the redeemed. Translate, "right," just as the word stands,—"*a judgment*," and we have a grand and sustaining contemplation. The schemes of the righteous are not ventures; neither are they accidents. They are not designs to work other independent purposes of Heaven. They are engendered for the conceiver's good. If they fail, they will fail usefully. If they blight, it will be for good. There is a "*judgment*" for the righteous; and in its round and perfect blessedness all his schemes are included, so as to minister to his good. The counsels of the wicked are the reverse. They may succeed, but never prosper. They may enrich, but will be certain to impoverish. They may be realized, but are sure to deceive. This is the teaching of the sentence. The schemes of the righteous are his "*judgment*," that is, a part of it; are to be woven in as blessings, taking part under his splendid reckoning. The expertnesses of the wicked are deceits. They may lift him ever so high. They will cast him inconceivably lower for all that they may achieve.

Precisely in point is the teaching of the next case:—

II.—CHAP. XIII : 23.

- 23 Much to eat is the light of the poor; | ²³ Much food is in the village of the poor: but there is but there is that is swept away as not judgment. | *that is destroyed for want of judgment.*

"Plenty to eat," may answer to all that is earthly. "Plenty to eat, is the light of the poor." The poor, as is here meant, are the lost. If there be light for the lost, it is on earth; it is in creature good; and in forms

so perishable as to be justly called, "much to eat." Who dreams that it will keep him from destruction? But if "much to eat" is a mere "lamp," and is a provision that it is mad to trust to, the great truth remains, that our real property is above; our interests are in court; our all depends upon a *verdict*; wealth, to be wealth at all, must come as part of it; and coming otherwise, it will certainly be a curse; for, as our text expresses it,—"There is that is destroyed as not a *judgment*."

So the next:—

III.—CHAP. xvi : 8.

- 8 Better is a little by means of righteousness, 8 Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right.
than great revenues by that which is not a judgment.

Better is a little that comes to us by righteousness: that is, better is the slenderest earthly provision that comes to us as ours, meaning, as part of our covenant right, than great revenues, not adjudged. ■ essence(see Class XXVI.) would set these terms still nearer. There may be room to doubt whether this be not the real purpose of the words selected. But *as*, or *by means of*, either, would imply this:—that little legally ours, is better than loads of wealth when not "*a judgment*."

These terms are somewhat awkward, but grate only in the expression. The lot is said to have *a judgment*. Mauren detects this. See 16:33. Not, the *whole disposing of it* (E. V.), but its "*whole judgment*." A case coming to be decided is left to the lot. The lot becomes a judge. The lot then, gives a verdict. In no Scripture that we know of does "*judgment*" mean mere justice without the thought of a set decision.

Less important cases are as follows:—

IV.—CHAP. xix : 28.

- 28 A worthless witness scorns judgment; 28 An ungodly witness scornereth judgment; and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity.
and the mouth of the wicked eagerly devours worthlessness.

V.—CHAP. xxi : 7.

- 7 The rapacity of the wicked snatches away 7 The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment.
themselves;
because it was they that refused to carry out judgment.

VI.—CHAP. xxix : 26.

- 26 Many seek the ruler's favor; 26 Many seek the ruler's favour: but every man's judgment cometh from the LORD.
but a man's judgment is from Jehovah.

A case already discussed (Class I), belongs also under this class:—

VII.—CHAP. ii : 8.

- 8 To keep watch over the paths of judgment, 8 He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.
He must also guard the way of His saints.

All creatures require "*a judgment*." Good or bad, all obtain it. Each "*judgment*" has to be followed out. Each following requires a path; and each path is the path of the Almighty. Every "*judgment*" then, for every saint, is an eternal path; and, to keep the path, God must also watch the path of the believer. "*Judgment*" already having been given in the believer's favor, there must be never a step in which he does not enjoy the benefit.

CLASS XLIX.

OVERLOOKED DIFFERENCES
IN THE
FOUR WORDS FOR MAN.

There are four words for *man*. שָׁבֵךְ means *a mortal*: בָּבֶר, *a strong man*; שָׁרֵךְ, *a man of the better sort*; and מְדָנָה, *man*, proper, or, where a distinction is made, *a man of the more common rank*. This distinction is sometimes made (E. V.), see Is. 2:9; 22:17, but it is often overlooked; and not unfrequently so as to hide the meaning:—

I.—CHAP. xii : 14.

- 14** With the earnings of the mouth of a man of the better sort, the good man will be satisfied: and the reward of the hands of a laboring man he will render to him.

14 A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth; and the recompence of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him.

Nothing could be more completely disinterred than this fine moral is from its previous concealment. The world groans with this very question to-day. It is the difficulty as between capital and labor. Solomon favors neither. He teaches that we be just to both. Agrarian folly, that would deny brain labor as having the superior claim, he dispatches at a word. But then he pleads for fairness, "With the earnings of the mouth of a man of the better sort" (for he admits that mouth-earnings (see Commentary) are higher than hand-earnings, and that one man is higher than another: he only pleads for fairness)—"With the earnings of the mouth of a man of the better sort the good man will be satisfied; and the reward of the hands of a laboring man he will render to him."

II.—CHAP. xviii : 16.

- 16** The gift of a plain man makes room for him, and brings him before the great.

16 A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.

The sense sharpens by distinguishing the sort of man.
Again, as noticeable cases:—

III.—CHAP. xix : 11.

- 11** The intelligence of the commonest man gives slowness to his anger; and it is his honor to pass over an offence.

11 The discretion of a man defereth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.

IV.—CHAP. xix : 21, 22.

- 21** Many are the schemes in the heart of a man of the better sort; but the counsel of Jehovah as such stands.
- 22** The pleasure of the commonest sort of man is his kindness; and better off is a poor man

21 There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.

22 The desire of a man is his kindness; and a poor man is better than a liar.

V.—CHAP. xx : 17.

- 17** Sweet to the most intelligent man is the bread of deceit ; but afterward his mouth shall be filled with gravel stones.
- 17** Bread of deceit is sweet to a man ; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.

VI.—CHAP. xxviii : 2, 3.

- 2** In the sin of a land many are its leaders ; but by the plainest man who imparts discernment, getting knowledge, it makes itself endure.
- 3** A strong man, who is poor, and oppresses the weak, is a shower that comes sweeping, so that there is no food.
- 2** For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof ; but by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged.
- 3** A poor man that oppresseth the poor is like a sweeping rain, which leaveth no food.

More signally :—

VII.—CHAP. xx : 24.

- 24** The steps of a powerful man are from Jehovah ; then a common man, how shall he discern his way ?
- 24** Man's goings are of the LORD ; how can a man then understand his own way ?

Read with the English Version, it is almost tautology. But, distinguishing the nouns, the meaning is complete. If the steps of a *strong man* are from Jehovah ; then what of a *common man* ? How idle for the weak and helpless to be sure of any lot before the Almighty.

VIII.—CHAP. xxix : 5.

- 5** A man of influence, speaking flatteringly about his neighbor, spreads a net for his feet.
- 5** A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.

Flattery by a *strong man* is, of course, the more dangerous.

IX.—CHAP. xxx : 2.

- 2** Forasmuch as I am more brutish, as to myself, than a man of the better sort, and have not the intelligence of a common man,
- 2** Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man.

See Class LVIII. The traits are Messianic. Not only of less knowledge than *men of rank* ; but ruder and more ignorant than many a *common man*.

CLASS L.

OVERLOOKED MEANING

OF

“WOMAN.”

There is a tendency in the East to personify in female forms concrete or abstract realities. As an example of the concrete, we have the “Bride”

(Jo. 3:29), and the "Daughter of Zion" (Matt. 21:5), both standing for the Church; and, as an example of the abstract, we have the Scarlet Woman (Rev. 17:4), or Harlot (Rev. 17:5), as standing for Impenitence, or the powers of evil. Solomon has examples of both:—of the concrete, in the last chapter, where the Church is spoken of as the "*Capable Woman*"; and of the abstract, in two special forms, and these constantly repeated; one of "*Wisdom*," retaining her own abstract name as showing that she is lovely on her own account; and the other of "*Folly*," rarely retaining her own abstract name, but called the "*Foolish Woman*" (Prov. 9:13), or the "*Strange Woman*" (Prov. 2:16), or the "*Brawling Woman*," to show that "*Folly*" is not loved on her own account, but only in those concrete shapes in which adultery, or some positive lust, stands arrayed against the pursuits of piety. The "*Strange Woman*," therefore, is Impenitence. It is fit to be warned by her against adultery; just as, in the Book of Revelation, the Harlot might warn a man against that special sin. But we are not to stop there. The female figures of the Proverbs are just as wide in their intent as the Woman Fleeing into the Wilderness (Rev. 12:6), or the Woman on a Scarlet-colored Beast (Rev. 17:3), which are Cartoons of John on Patmos. The *Contentious Woman* is spoken of too often, and the *Harlot* portrayed too much, and too often associated with higher things; the lineaments are too complete, and the assertions too strong, and too unqualified (5:6; 6:35)—to be regarded as just, if applied simply to the vicious. In fact, in the older books, this our understanding has been more than surmised. We will not, therefore, class the cases as now for the first time advanced, but content ourselves with one or two of the less obvious, which we never before considered:—

I.—CHAP. xi : 16.

- 16** Grace gets hold of glory;
and the violent get hold of riches.

|
16 A gracious woman re-taineth honour; and strong men retain riches.

Literally, the "*Woman of Grace*." Our reading would make "*woman*" superfluous. It ministers to the picturesque. It personifies. It does not add to the meaning. When we speak of the "*Woman of Evil*" (6:24), we mean "*Evil*;" *woman* simply painting a picture. When we speak of the "*Woman of Folly*," we mean "*Folly*." When we speak of the "*wisdoms of women*" (14:1), we mean ultimately "*wisdoms*,"—(pluralis excellentiarum) "*Wisdom*" in its highest sense. No one can canvass these Proverbs without being persuaded that "*Woman*" is a signal for an abstract sense.

II.—CHAP. xi : 22.

- 22** A gold ring in a swine's snout;
a fair and tasteless woman.

|
22 As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion.

A quality, not a sex, is here to be considered. The "*woman*," like Caryatides, supports, and gives grace. She is not of the essence of the sentence, but only of its rhetoric. A *fair woman* may be all that is here asserted, but is thought of as a type, and with no intent, therefore, to exhaust or confine the signification.

So of all those Proverbs which speak of a termagant:—

III.—CHAP. xxi : 9.

- 9** It is better to dwell upon a pinnacle of the roof,
than that there should be a brawling woman
and a house in common.

|
9 It is better to dwell in a corner of the house-top, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.

IV.—CHAP. XXI : 19.

- 19 Better is life in a desert land,
than a contentious and fretful woman.

19 *It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.*

V.—CHAP. XXV : 24.

- 24 Better is dwelling upon a pinnacle of the roof,
than a contentious woman and a house in common.

24 *It is better to dwell in a corner of the house-top, than with a brawling woman, and in a wide house.*

VI.—CHAP. XXVII : 15.

- 15 A continual dropping in a very rainy day,
and a contentious woman, are alike.

15 *A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.*

Instead of the secular meaning being true, and the spiritual meaning being vague and mystic, the fact is the reverse. It may be better to dwell with the *Terrorant* than in the desert. But it is better to dwell in Hell, than with sin in Heaven. These texts are not so often repeated simply to denounce quarrelsome ness, but like Caryatides of truth, just as the "Harlot" is, or the "Woman of Evil."

The only concrete case, we have explained at large in the body of the Commentary :—

VII.—CHAP. XXXI : 10, etc.

- 10 Who can find a capable woman ?
So that her price is far above pearls.

10 *Who can find a virtuous woman ? for her price is far above rubies.*

CLASS LI.

OVERLOOKED EMBLEMS.

I.—CHAP. VII : 9.

- 9 in the cool ; in the evening of the day ;
in the very bosom of the night and deep darkness.

9 *In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night.*

In rhetoric haste the whole progress of the night is pictured. The lameness of other comments is, that these terms are set in apposition. In fact Zöckler claims that "twilight" (E. V.) is the translation of a word that may reach into the deepest "night." How useless this is ! The en snared is gliding to his fate as the gloaming glides on into the darkness.

II.—CHAP. VII : 22.

- 22 starting after her suddenly as an ox enters to the slaughter,
and as a chain for the punishment of a fool ;

22 *He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks ;*

A bull is drawn to his fate by a chain, which, while he may resist its being drawn in, resists, on its part, his drawing out. It holds all that he yields. In this way the victim of Impenitence is a chain to himself. His own nature holds him to the measure of depravity he has reached ; and takes all the additional corruption he is willing to concede. The English Version reverses the Hebrew and modern philologists seem all to

reject it. The sense, possibly, must needs be somewhat conjectural. The word "chain" occurs but twice; and may mean something less long than that which confines the bullock. Still the image seems correct. The lost move in like the ox; and, more artistic still, like the chain. They are a fetter to themselves; and, as the chain winds in with the bull, so the soul holds fast to all that is conceded by its own corruption.

III.—CHAP. x : 6.

- 6 Blessings are for the head of the righteous man; but wrong covers the mouth of the wicked.

6 Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

IV.—CHAP. x : 11.

- 11 A fountain of life is the mouth of a righteous man; but wrong covers the mouth of the wicked.

11 The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life; but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

The overlooking here has been entire. The texts are opposites. The mouth, when covered, cannot utter speech, and cannot take in nourishment. Such are the intended emblems. The sinner's is closed in both particulars. He cannot get good (v. 6), and he cannot do good (v. 11). Blessings are upon the head of the just; but the mouth of the wicked is closed, that he cannot receive them. The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life; but the mouth of the wicked is closed that it can utter nothing for the good of others. The distinct recognition of these neighboring meanings is of course essential to the beauty of the passage.

V.—CHAP. x : 20.

- 20 Choice silver is the tongue of a righteous man.

The heart of the wicked is as a scrap.

20 The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth.

This term for *little* comes from a verb meaning to *scrape* or *shave*. The noun primarily means a *scrapping*, or something *scraped*. Ordinarily, the term "*little*" (E. V.) is the very best translation. But here the antithesis of "*choice silver*" would kindle up the primary idea, and wake to a Hebrew eye the very spirit of the trope.

VI.—CHAP. xvii : 19.

- 19 He loves sin that loves contention; and he that sets high his gate, seeks ruin.

19 He loveth transgression that loveth strife; and he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction.

A "*high gate*" was for letting troops pass out, with spears and banners. It was not an emblem of pride, therefore, but of belligerence. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates!" (Ps. 24:7), means,—for the entrance of our Deliverer. The mention of "*strife*" in the earlier clause ought to have suggested this in the present Proverb.

VII.—CHAP. xviii : 19.

- 19 When a brother is revolted away, it is from a city of strength; and contentions are like the bar of a citadel.

19 A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city; and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.

The emblem is a "*citadel*." The "*citadel*" is a man's "*brother*." The thought is,—the strength that one brother can be to another. The doctrine is,—that strife destroys this strength. A brother, "*revolted away*," or whose peace is broken with a brother, is revolted away from "*a city of strength*." The moment they quarrel, each loses a city of strength.

Their contentions, therefore, are a bar to a castle. How completely this emblem has been missed. The picture is perfect. Brothers might be shelters to each other. Either, breaking away, breaks from a city of strength; and the quarrel is a bar to a citadel.

VIII.—CHAP. xxii : 5, 6.

- 5 Thorns are snares in the way of the crooked man.
He that guards his soul shall get far from them.
6 Hedge in a child upon the mouth of his way: even for the very reason that he grows old he shall not depart from it.
- 5 Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward; he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them.
6 Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

"Thorns are snares in the way of the perverse," that is,—Troubles are temptations. To the good, they are a chastisement; to the bad, they are a bane. Still we are to use them with children. Hedge in child on the mouth of his way, and his getting old will take the labor out of thy hand, and find him quietly settled for his journey. It is by completeness of figures that texts are made to weld and settle expressively together.

IX.—CHAP. xxii : 15.

- 15 Folly is fettered in the heart of a child. The rod of correction removes it from him.
- 15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

Not bound up, but bound; not inwrought, but "fettered." The emblem has been quite inverted. Impenitence is not strong in the heart of a child; but weak. Comparatively, it is easily managed. In the sense in which it is compared in old age, wickedness is under awe in childhood, and singularly bound. The rod of correction can drive it out then if ever. It is not treating the truth,—that we are helpless always; but speaking of instruments. Means are strong with childhood, that are utterly weak with old age.

X.—CHAP. xxiii : 28.

- 28 Yea, she herself, like loot, lies temptingly; and increases the robbers among men.
- 28 She also lieth in wait as for a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men.

Here, of course, the whole emblem is changed. A robber lies in wait; and a treasure lies temptingly. The thought is very different. Suppose we were to let the second clause be umpire. Which makes most thieves, the scheming of the robber, or the loose lying about of everything precious?

XI.—CHAP. xxv : 23.

- 23 A north wind breeds rain, and angry countenances a secret tongue.
- 23 The north wind driveth away rain; so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.

Scholars have discovered the emblem in the former clause (see Maurer, Zickler, etc.), but ruined everything by inverting the latter. The old reading made Boreas drive away rain, just as anger browbeats (trapp) and drives away a backbiting tongue. The difficulties are all serious. Neither the Lexicon, nor the facts of nature, nor the course of human experience, seem to justify any such rendering. The verb does not mean, to drive; the North Wind does not clear the heavens in Palestine; and anger does not stop evil-speaking. Hence the change by modern scholars has been easy:—"The North Wind produces rain;" but then,

unfortunately, they have still spoiled the emblem. "The North Wind produces rain, and a secret tongue an angry countenance." So Maurer. This sentence is true enough; especially if the tongue ceases to be secret, and the victim hears of it; but where is the value of such a Proverb? Moreover, where is the right to invert the language? Is there any such value in the idea that slandering anybody maddens him, as to make it a good occasion for reversing a Hebrew sentence? But now, keep all in place, and the emblem immediately appears. The cold wind in Palestine brought up clouds, and covered the heavens with tempest; so an angry avenger, forgetting the very last text (vs. 21, 22),—"If thine enemy hunger feed him," and, bearing down on men with wrath and vengeance,—does what? why, withdraw malice, perhaps, into holes; but, all the more, wake up a secret and more poisonous malignity.

XII.—CHAP. xxv : 26.

- 26 A trampled fountain and ruined spring
is a righteous man thought tottering by the wicked.

26 A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain and a corrupt spring.

A righteous man, failing or tottering before a wicked man, means, as we have seen already (see Class XLII), tottering as the wicked man supposes, or failing as he esteems it or in his opinion. Such a seeming failure is like "a trampled fountain." The figure could hardly be more complete. You turn cattle in upon a spring, and in a year they have ruined it. They break down its wall, and tramp up its bed; and by Spring it will be swamp and tussock. But it is spoiled only as you think. The farmer meant it to be trampled just as you see; and can mend it in two hours' labor. So a saint may be ruined in the eyes of men, but all right with the Almighty. The stream is still flowing under the hill; and the "trampled fountain" lives, and is perpetual, and has added to the record of its usefulness all through these troubled years. How singular that such a perfect emblem should lie so long hid; and should have to be dug out now, as though for the first time any part of revelation!

XIII.—CHAP. xxv : 28.

- 28 A broken down city without a wall
is a man who has no enclosure around his spirit.

28 He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.

The walls of a city are to keep out an enemy. The "rule" (E. V.) of a man's spirit is over an enemy within. The trope does not tally, therefore. There must be some mistake. The verb נָצַר means, to enclose. The noun נָצֶר means, an "enclosure." To translate it "rule," breaks away all its edge. The words are gospel. The soul needs an "enclosure." It is threatened by God's wrath, and by a thousand enemies. It needs the righteous man's defence. A city, broken down and without a wall, is, the best sort of man (**שִׁירָה**) who has no enclosure for his spirit.

XIV.—CHAP. xxvi : 7-10.

- 7 The legs drag after the lame;
so does a proverb in the mouth of fools.
8 As he that binds a stone in a sling,
so is he that gives honor to a fool.
9 A thorn has gone up into the hand of the drunkard,
and a proverb into the mouth of fools.

7 The legs of the lame are not equal; so is a parable in the mouth of fools.

8 As he that bindeth a stone in a sling; so is he that giveth honour to a fool.

9 As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard; so is a parable in the mouth of fools.

- 10 An arrow wounding everybody
is he, also, that rewards the fool, and rewards
transgressors. | 10 The great God that
formed all things, both re-
wardeth the fool and reward-
eth transgressors.

These emblems have been wonderfully discussed, and almost every significance suggested. They have but one key. They never can be unriddled till that is supplied to them. This seminal thought is, that truth hardens the unbeliever. The unbeliever, in Solomon's language, is the "fool." Truth, in Solomon's language, is "*a Proverb*" (see Ec. 12:9). The emblems are all distinct; and yet they all imply the stages of the one great idea. In the first place, truth is an actual load to him who is persistently impenitent. "The legs drag after the lame; so a parable in the mouth of fools" (v. 7). But now, worse than mere stiffness, which clogs and encumbers, is a *sling stone*, which actually kills. "As one fixes a stone in a sling, so is he that gives honor to a fool" (v. 8). "Honor" may include all blessing. We cannot help a sinner without making him more dangerous. Send him to College; establish him in State schools; load him with "honor;" give him any degrees of wealth; we not only tie a thing in "*a sling*," which he will cast utterly away, but we make him more dangerous; we give him more weapons to hurl mischief upon his fellow men. Not only so, we make him a party injured. He may not know it. It is like "*a thorn that goes up into the hand of a drunkard*" (v. 9). He may be too drunk to let it make him feel any the less glorious. But it wounds him none the less. He will wake up some day to its pains. And then, last of all, our very commerce with the lost, in ways, too, that we can hardly alter, makes them more dangerous:—"An arrow, wounding everybody, is he, also, that rewards the fool, and rewards transgressors" (v. 10).

XV.—CHAP. xxvii : 8.

- 8 As a bird is shaken from its nest;
so a man is shaken from his place.

8 As a bird that wandereth
from her nest; so is a man
that wandereth from his place.

This has already been considered (see Class XXIX.). The emblem is patent. A man loathes a change, just as the fledgling has to be *shaken from the nest*.

XVI.—CHAP. xxvii : 17.

- 17 Iron is welded by iron;
so, for a man, the tie is the face of his friend. | 17 Iron sharpeneth iron; so
a man sharpeneth the coun-
tenance of his friend.

XVII.—CHAP. xxvii : 19.

- 19 As water, face to face;
so heart, man to man. | 19 As in water face answer-
eth to face: so the heart of
man to man.

We know of no emblems more beautiful. The subject is fellowship. The tie of fellowship is said to be taste. Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart; so does sweetness its fellow by the dictate of appetite" (v. 9). Men like perfume from appetite. So men like piety from appetite; and like piety in others from the same appetite; and this appetite is the prevailing bond which ties all good Christians into one. Saints, therefore, to like other saints, must be like them; and the assimilating likeness must be their communion in piety. Now the emblems of this are "*iron*" (v. 17) and "*water*" (v. 19). *Iron can only be united by iron*. To weld a piece of iron, we must bring it face to face with other iron; and this congenial nature is the best condition of their being firmly knit. So "*water*." One type is an advance upon the last. Iron sticks to iron; but water perfectly minglest as it blends. Iron, therefore, is the first type: water.

the better one. Iron is united by iron ; so, for a man, the tie is what? why, piety. And how is piety to be seen? why, in a friend. And how are we to see it in a friend ? not, as God does, in his spirit, but as man must, in his face, and fellowship. So much for the ruder emblem. "Iron is united by iron ; so, for a man, the tie is the face of his friend." But now the more advanced emblem,—"As water, face to face ;" that is, as one face of water, touching another face of water, loses itself indiscriminately in it,—so "heart," from happy similarity of grace, blends, "man with man." Iron sharpening iron (E. V.), and water reflecting back a face (E. V.), are conjurings of an image, which has smothered for ages one of Solomon's most divine ideas.

CLASS LII.

OVERLOOKED SENSE

OF

SURETYSHIPS.

I.—CHAP. vi : 1-5.

- 1 My son, if thou art under surety to thy friend, thou hast stricken thy hand for a stranger.
- 2 Thou art snared by the speeches of thy mouth. Thou hast been caught by the speeches of thy mouth.
- 3 Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself; for thou hast come into the hand of thy friend :—
- 4 Go cast thyself under foot, and implore thy friend.
- 5 Give not sleep to thine eyes, or drowsy heaviness to thine eyelids.
- 6 Get snatched as a roe from the hand ; yea, as a bird from the hand of the ensnarer.

¹ My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger,

² Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth.

³ Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend.

⁴ Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids.

⁵ Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.

No one can look at this passage in detail without agreeing that there has been a distressing oversight. Not only is our whole canon true (see Introd. § VI.), that no Proverb in this book is for a secular use; but there are machineries about these particular ones, that perfectly identify them as intended for religion. Who is the "Friend"? Who is the "stranger"? What is the *snare*? *Sureties* may be at times a risk ; but sometimes the very opposite. Why "deliver" ourselves? Why "humble" ourselves? Why, so strongly, about a "roe" and "a fowler"? Why "give [no] sleep to [our] eyes"? and why speak of the subject again? for, six mortal times is it brought among the Proverbs. The "Friend" is God. The "stranger" is our fallen Adam. The suretiship is our bond for sin. The snare has its fetters in the law. The deliverance is by application to the Friend. And the diligence is the unslumbering heat with which we should humble ourselves, and pursue the Saviour. All these things are clear. The terms are too formal for a mere worldly code. And a mere maxim about risk would be heaven-wide from being so often repeated. We enumer-

ate the remaining list for the usual end of getting light on each case from the others :—

II.—CHAP. xi : 15.

- 15 The evil man does ill because he is surety
for a stranger :
but a hater of sureties is the believer.

15 He that is surety for a
stranger shall smart *for it* ;
and he that hateth suretship
is sure.

III.—CHAP. xvii : 18.

- 18 A man without sense strikes hands,
assuming over again a suretship in the very
presence of his Friend.

18 A man void of under-
standing striketh hands, *and*
becometh surety in the pres-
ence of his friend.

IV.—CHAP. xx : 16.

- 16 Take his garment because he has gone se-
curity for a stranger ;
and on account of strange people make him
give a pledge.

16 Take his garment that is
surety *for* a stranger ; and
take a pledge of him for a
strange woman.

V.—CHAP. xxii : 26, 27.

- 26 Be not among those that strike hands,
and among those that are surety for debts.
27 If thou hast nothing to pay,
wherefore should one take thy bed from un-
der thee ?

26 Be not thou *one* of them
that strike hands, *or* of them
that are sureties for debts.
27 If thou hast nothing to
pay, why should he take
away thy bed from under
thee ?

VI.—CHAP. xxvii : 13.

- 13 Take a man's garment because he has be-
come surety for a stranger ;—
and, on account of a strange woman, make
him give a pledge.

13 Take his garment that
is surety for a stranger, and
take a pledge of him for a
strange woman.

CLASS LIII.

OVERLOOKED PECULIARITIES OF THE PASSAGES

WHERE

LONG LIFE, WEALTH, AND HONOR,

SEEM TO BE

PROMISED TO THE PIous.

Christians are not known to be more long-lived, or richer, or more honored, than the worldly. On the contrary, most of these things, particularly wealth, are unduly imagined as belonging to the impenitent. In the same breath * religion is spoken of as most often with the poor ; and, at the same time, as promising directly to enrich ! The probability is that Solomon is right, that all things come alike to all (Eccles. 9 : 2) ; and we have been startled to find some specialty of grammar turning aside all the Proverbs which men seemed to have felt sure were to be made worldly promises :—

* The writer recently heard it in the same sermon.

I.—CHAP. iii : 1, 2.

- 1 My son, forget not what I direct,
and let thy heart watch my commandments ;
2 for length of days and years of life
and prosperity shall make thee greater.

1 My son, forget not my law ; but let thine heart keep my commandments :
2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

Here the genders set us right. The first genders are feminine. The nouns in the second verse are masculines. The verb is masculine. Then why not refer it to these nouns ? If we do, then piety does not promise long life ; but it promises that "length of days and years of life and prosperity," if, in God's Providence, possessed, shall increase us or make us greater.

So another passage :—

II.—CHAP. iii : 16.

- 16 Length of days is in her right hand,
in her left, riches and honor.

16 Length of days is in her right hand ; and in her left hand riches and honour.

The "hand" in Scripture is an emblem of activity (Deut. 32 : 36) ; the "right hand" of a main activity (Ex. 15 : 6). To be "in [the] right hand," means, to be a most efficient instrument (Rev. 1 : 16). That "length of days are in Wisdom's right hand, means that they are her potent instrument ; and, "in her left, riches and honor," means, not certainly that she possesses them, but that, if she possess them, they are scarcely less efficient than protracted years.

III.—CHAP. iv : 10.

- 10 Hear, O my son, and take my words,
and they shall grow greater to thee through
years of life.

10 Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings ; and the years of thy life shall be many.

Here again the gender, if left to decide, will make "words," and not "years" (E. V.), the nominative. If "words" be the nominative, it is the "words," and not "years," that are to grow great. "Years," then, falls into the absolute. There emerges in this way the same idea. Obey and be blessed. Be blessed, not by living long, but by these very "words" enriching and growing great. "Hear, O my son, and take my sayings, and they shall grow great to thee through years of life."

IV.—CHAP. viii : 18.

- 18 Riches and honor are with me ;
durable ease and righteousness.

18 Riches and honour are with me ; yea, durable riches and righteousness.

Even old Bridges is not deterred by this passage from misunderstanding others. And, misunderstanding others, he makes no point of this. But the next verse ought to set it right ; for it says,— "My fruit is better than gold." And this verse itself is a corrective ; for it defines its wealth, and calls it (E. V.), "yea, durable riches and righteousness."

But now, more difficult looking cases :—

V.—CHAP. ix : 11.

- 11 For by me thy days shall become great ;
and they shall make thee greater through
years of life.

11 For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased.

"Multiplied" (E. V.) is not so often the translation as "made great." The first clause, therefore, gives us no difficulty. The second clause has a $\ddot{\text{y}}$ instead of an y . It is less likely, on this account, to mean, *add to* :

that is, "add to thee years," as would be what is literal under the English Version. We have good right to a reading,—"make increase for thee, for years;" and these grammatical parts, all put together, bring out the one new thought :—"For by me thy days shall be made great; and they shall make increase for thee for years of life."

VI.—CHAP. X : 27.

- 27 The fear of Jehovah makes great days ;
but the years of the wicked shall be made 27 The fear of the LORD
prolongeth days : but the
years of the wicked shall be
shortened.
little.

Here, at length, our theory might seem to break down; the English Version seems so positive. But the Lexicon, and the Grammar, again convert the meaning, and change it from, multiplying days, to, making them great or weighty. The word "prolongeth" (E. V.) better answers to the root *as*, "increases" or, "adds to," in the sense of *making great*; and the expression "shall be shortened" (E. V.) we despaired of at first, as seeming to be too palpable; but mark an evidence that springs up in the very version of King James. Not only do we hear of the Lord's hand being shortened (Is. 50:2); and of a man's spirit being shortened (Num. 21:4, E. V., *marg.*) ; but, most meetly at hand, the very idea of *days*' being shortened; that is, enfeebled. David is speaking; and that not in view of death :—"He weakened my strength in the way. He shortened my days" (Ps. 102:23).

One more instance: the same idea; not of worldly good; but of a "life" and of a "wealth" that is from above :—

VII.—CHAP. XXII : 4.

- 4 The end of a humiliation which is the fear of 4 By humility, and the fear
of the LORD, are riches, and
honour, and life.
Jehovah
is wealth and honor and life.

CLASS LIV.

OVERLOOKED PREFACE

TO

NUMBERED LISTS OR STATEMENTS.

In the Apocalypse, visions before the eye of John are preceded by audible voices. The voice is the key, or meaning rather, of the image. He hears a voice saying unto him, "I am Alpha and Omega" (Rev. 1:11); and, when he turned, he saw One like unto the Son of Man. As the Alpha, he saw Him white with age,—"His head and His hairs white like wool, as white as snow;" and, as the Omega, he saw Him endless in foreknowledge, and strong to travel through the depths of time: "His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace" (vs. 14, 15). The picture was the translation of the voice. So in a chapter afterward; he heard a voice, saying,—"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord;" giving a reason, too; for "their works do follow them" (Rev. 14:13, 14); and he looked this time again, and lo, a like translation!—Christ, with the Sickle; the blessed dead ready to be harvested ;—"Thrust in thy sickle, and reap!" and the golden

grain of the covenant gathered in; as answering to the blessed dead. So, now, in this book of Solomon; there are quaint and half-unmeaning lists; but, when we look close, there is always a "voice," or a something prefatory to every one of them:—

- 1.—CHAP. vi : 9-19.
- 9 How long wilt thou lie, O sluggard?
When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?
10 A little sleep! A little drowsing!
A little folding of the hands to rest!
11 So comes thy poverty like one that travels;
and thy want like an armed man.
12 A worthless man; a man utterly in vain;
walking in crookedness of mouth;
13 talking with his eyes; speaking with his
feet;
motioning with his fingers;
14 with upturnings in his heart; fabricating
evil;
will be putting forth grounds of quarrel all
the time.
15 Wherefore his crushing shall come suddenly;
at a stroke shall he be broken, and there be
no remedy.
16 These six things Jehovah hates;
Yea, seven are an abomination to His very
soul:—
17 Lofty eyes; a lying tongue;
and hands that shed innocent blood;
18 a heart fabricating empty devices;
feet that run swift to evil;
19 a deceived witness whose breath is lies;
and he that puts grounds of quarrel among
brethren.
- 9 How long wilt thou sleep,
O sluggard? when wilt thou
arise out of thy sleep?
10 Yet a little sleep, a little
slumber, a little folding of the
hands to sleep:
11 So shall thy poverty
come as one that travelleth,
and thy want as an armed
man.
12 A naughty person, a
wicked man, walketh with a
froward mouth.
13 He winketh with his
eyes, he speaketh with his
feet, he teacheth with his
fingers;
14 Frowardness is in his
heart, he deviseth mischief
continually; he soweth dis-
cord.
15 Therefore shall his cal-
amity come suddenly; sud-
denly shall he be broken with-
out remedy.
16 These six things doth
the Lord hate; yea, seven
are an abomination unto him;
17 A proud look, a lying
tongue, and hands that shed
innocent blood;
18 An heart that deviseth
wicked imaginations, feet that
be swift in running to mis-
chief;
19 A false witness that
speaketh lies, and him that
soweth discord among breth-
ren.

The grand beginning is with the Sluggard (and the Sluggard is the man that will not flee as a roe from the hunter, in getting rid of his suretiship to guilt: see Class LII. 6:1-8). Instead of the Sluggard being merely worthless (v. 12), i. e., a man of Belial, a man utterly in vain (v. 12), and, therefore, only detrimental to himself,—this passage labors with him as one utterly noxious; teaching with his very fingers; beckoning away others from their allegiance to Heaven. And, therefore, after having painted this in the very strongest light, it goes back over it in a summed-up list; changed a little, to be sure, because intensified; but all a list of the horrors of the Sluggard-surety (v. 9).

A more novel instance of such a preface to a list is the tenth verse of the thirtieth chapter. There, it is not sluggardism, but something like it,—a mere tongue service:—

- II.—CHAP. xxx : 10-33.
- 10 Give not tongue service, as a servant to his
master,
lest He curse thee, and thou be held guilty.
11 A generation after will curse its father,
and not bless its mother.
- 10 Accuse not a servant un-
to his master, lest he curse
thee, and thou be found
guilty.
11 There is a generation
that curseth their father, and
doth not bless their mother.

- 12 A generation after that will be clean in its own eyes,
and yet not washed from its filthiness.
- 13 A generation still after, O how lofty have become its eyes,
and its eyelids lifted up.
- 14 A generation further yet will have swords for its teeth, and knives for its fangs,
to devour the troubled from the earth, and the needy from among men.
- 15 The horse leech has two daughters, Give. Give.
These three things are never satisfied ; four have never said,—Enough :—
- 16 Sheol ; and the enclosure of the womb ; the earth, which has never filled with water ; and fire, which has never said,—Enough.
- 17 The eye that mocks a father, and has a contempt for obeying a mother, the ravens of the brook shall bore it through, and the children of the eagle shall eat it.
- 18 These three things are quite beyond me ; yea, four I cannot mark :—
- 19 the way of the eagle in the heavens ; the way of a serpent over a rock ; the way of a ship in the open sea ; and the way of a man in a girl.
- 20 In such a way has the adulterous woman eaten, and wiped her mouth, and said.—I have committed no naughtiness.
- 21 Under three things the world has been disquieted ; and under four she will never be able to bear up :—
- 22 under a servant, because he becomes king ; and a vile fellow, because he is sated with food ;
- 23 under a hateful woman, because she is married ; and a handmaid, because she dispossesses her mistress.
- 24 These four are little things of earth ; and it is such, that are wise, being made wise.
- 25 The ants are a people of no strength, yet they make sure their food in the summer.
- 26 Conies are a people not strong, yet they fix their dwelling in a rock.
- 27 There is no king for the locust, yet he goes forth making fair division of all.
- 28 The spotted lizard takes hold with his hands, and such as he is in king's palaces.
- 29 These three make each step good, yea, four make good their going :—
- 12 There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet not washed from their filthiness.*
- 13 There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes ! and their eyelids are lifted up.*
- 14 There is a generation whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw-teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.*
- 15 The horse-leech hath two daughters, crying, Give, give. There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough :*
- 16 The grave ; and the barren womb ; the earth that is not filled with water ; and the fire that saith not, It is enough.*
- 17 The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.*
- 18 There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not :*
- 19 The way of an eagle in the air, the way of a serpent upon a rock, the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, and the way of a man with a maid.*
- 20 Such is the way of an adulterous woman ; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.*
- 21 For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear :*
- 22 For a servant when he reigneth, and a fool when he is filled with meat :*
- 23 For an odious woman when she is married, and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress.*
- 24 There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise :*
- 25 The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer ;*
- 26 The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks ;*
- 27 The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands ;*
- 28 The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in king's palaces.*
- 29 There be three things which go well, yea, four are comely in going :*

- 30 a lion, mighty among beasts,
and that turns not back for any ;
 31 a grey-hound, or a he-goat,
and a King ! Do not thou stand against
Ilim.
 32 If thou hast been withered down, by lifting
thyself up,
and if thou hast been meditating with a hand
upon the mouth,
 33 forasmuch as pressing milk presses out whey,
and pressing the nose presses out blood,
so pressing down passion presses away strife.
- 30 A lion, which is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any :
 31 A grey-hound ; an he-goat, also ; and a king, against whom there is no rising up.
 32 If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth.
 33 Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood ; so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.

That trivial thing apparently, a mere patterning of prayer ; a serving God emptily by mere working of the lips,—is set up at the start, and the most horrid consequences permitted to appear. First; four stages of degeneracy ; four generations : the parents beginning with a tongue service, and their posterity having four stages of decline (vs. 11–14) ; then the *insatiableness* of this decline, under four images (vs. 15–17) ; and how, declension begun, the soul is as good as slain (v. 17) ; then *unconsciousness*, as another trait, and that under four particulars (vs. 18–20) ; then, the *intolerableness* of the state, under four particulars more (vs. 21–23) ; then the *remedy*, and a list again (vs. 24–28) ; then the urging of that remedy, with another list (vs. 29–33). Of course, the reader must judge how very vastly he unrolls the Book, when, instead of a jumble of lists, he gets a preface to the whole, and inspires with a connected spirit the whole pictured catalogue in its quaintness to the very end (see the more extended Commentary). How much better this than the conclusion of Stuart,—that “in some we can find no moral, but have mere similitudes, adapted more to surprise or please than to impart ethical instruction” ! (Stuart on Proverbs ; note ; p. 421).

CLASS LV.

OVERLOOKED GOSPEL.

A real difficulty in the mind of many scholars in seeing the gospel anywhere in Proverbs has been a deference to the times, and an idea that the age had not reached that measure of spiritual illumination. But then, Balaam ; nay, still earlier, Adam,—must be glossed over in their instance, too, and as to much of most precious gospel. How are we to know how much the age knew, except by what the age wrote ? and if, eviscerating successive texts, we are actually excluding Christ on grounds that we are ourselves creating ? We claim, therefore, that unnoticed gospel is one source of obscured translation.

I.—CHAP. x : 8.

- 8 He of the wise heart shall lift away the commandments ;
 and he of the foolish lips shall be the one entangled.
- 8 The wise in heart will receive commandments ; but a prating fool shall fall.

The verb to *take* means often to *take away* (Gen. 40:19). The noun “commandment” means *law* more judicially than that word *direction* (see

3 : 1), which is usually so translated. The English Version is the most profitless common-place. The reader must judge whether a meaning that sounds like Paul, may not be as consistent with Solomon as one that would prostitute a Proverb to talk like this,—that a wise man will accept what is commanded!

Other gospel texts are these :—

II.—CHAP. xiii : 14.

- 14** The direction of a wise man is a burrowing | **14** The law of the wise *is* a
out place of life, fountain of life, to depart from
for getting away out of the snares of death. the snares of death.

III.—CHAP. xiv : 27.

- 27** The fear of Jehovah is where life burrows | **27** The fear of the LORD *is*
out a fountain of life, to depart
in getting away out of the snares of death. from the snares of death.

IV.—CHAP. xvi : 6.

- 6** By mercy and truth iniquity is covered ; | **6** By mercy and truth in-
and through the fear of Jehovah is the turn-
ing from evil. *iquity* is purged ; and by the
fear of the LORD *men* depart
from evil.

V.—CHAP. xxiv : 7-12.

- 7** The wisdoms attaching to a fool are perfect | **7** Wisdom *is* too high for a
jewels ; fool ; he openeth not his
though he opens not his mouth in the gate.
8 Though he thinks to do evil, | **8** He that deviseth to do
men might call him a very master of devices. evil shall be called a mis-
9 The design of folly is the Sin-Offering ; chievous person.
and the abomination, in the case of man, is | **9** The thought of foolish-
the scorner. ness *is* sin ; and the scorner
10 If thou hast been remiss in the day of nar- | **10** If thou faint in the day
row trial, of adversity, thy strength *is*
still narrower has become thy strength. small.
11 If thou forbearest to snatch them that are | **11** If thou forbear to deliver
laid hold of for death, them that are drawn unto
and them that are tottering to the slaughter : death, and those that are
12 because thou sayest,—Behold we have not ready to be slain :
the knowledge : | **12** If thou sayest, Behold,
as to this, is there not One weighing out we knew it not ; doth not he
hearts ? He has the discernment : that pondereth the heart con-
and One watching thy soul ? He has the sider it ? and he that keep-
knowledge ; eth thy soul, doth not he
and He will render to man according to know *it* ? and shall not he
his works. render to *every* man accord-
ing to his works ?

VI.—CHAP. xxix : 26.

- 26** Many seek the ruler's favor ; | **26** Many seek the ruler's
but a man's judgment is from Jehovah. favour : but *every* man's judg-
ment cometh from the LORD.

Of course we might add all that relates to the Sin-Offering (Class XLIII.); in fact, much that is in other classes (see Classes LVI. and LVIII.)

We add a special text, which seems to admit a sense not usually thought of in the teachings of theology :—

VII.—CHAP. xix : 19.

- 19** Roughness of anger lifts away penalty ; but if it delivers, it must do so continually. | ¹⁰ A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment ; for if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again.

Punishment is meant to expiate. The punishment of Christ does expiate. The punishment of man would expiate, if it could continue long enough and the victim cease from sin. Sin is never infinite, for it is more or less ; it can be measured now or when greater, or in me or in some greater sinner. Sin, to be infinite, must be all alike. If sin be finite, it could be expiated. Sin, to be expiated, must hold still. Here seems the burden of the Proverb. "Roughness of anger lifts away punishment." Doubtless this is the very gist of the Atonement. Why not Hell, therefore, save ? The Proverb explains. Each pang answers to a weight of guilt. Did I keep guilt from getting greater, Hell might overtake and pay my debt. But alas ! Hell is wicked ! Sin goes on. Guilt really accelerates, so that its mountain rises faster than pain pares it down. My curse is DEATH ; and, on this account, "*roughness of anger lifts away penalty* ;"—but *cui bono* ! We are Sisyphus, and our shoulder is under the stone. Punishment pays continually ; but continual sin piles more than pain can expiate.

CLASS LVI.

UNNOTICED DOCTRINE.

An eye to the very highest truth clears up many Proverbs. In Ecclesiastes (5 : 9, E. V.) there is a farming sentence. It has grown familiar. It is as follows :—" Moreover the profit of the earth is for all : the king himself is served by the field." We inspect it closer, however, and the bucolic oracle disappears, as it ought. Where is the good of such sentences ? And why do we tolerate them, as a patch on a beautiful face ? Ecclesiastes has been working in the very profoundest realms. He has brought out whole revenues of thought. This is in the very midst. Therefore, we inspect it most deeply. And there turns out at length this Hebrew : "Moreover the profit of the earth is by everything ;" that is,—Advantage (taking that in the very highest shape, holiness as well as happiness) is to be the result of all existences ; and the king himself, i. e., some prince of creatures who might seem to be most above being subjected to use,—but helps the story. "Advantage to the earth is by everything. The king himself is ploughed like a field."

Thus now our first case :—

I.—CHAP. xvi : 10.

- 10** There is a divination on the lips of a king ; his mouth is not treacherous in judgment. | ¹⁰ A divine sentence is in the lips of the king ; his mouth transgresseth not in judgment.

If "the king himself is ploughed like a field" (Eccles. 5 : 9), every order of a king must be decreed. He may be Nero ; or he may be George the Third. He may be a knave ; or a fool. Yet, as immensities hang upon his lips, they must not transgress a handbreadth. This is just our passage. There is a divination on the lips of kings. The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. And when empires are hanging on his

breath, badness or weakness or changefulness may reign in him as much as you please; his final judgments are as fixed as they are wicked.

Instantaneous conversion is the next teaching:—

II.—CHAP. XVI : 20.

20 He that is wise, may, for one act, find good ;
so he that casts himself on Jehovah, blessed | 20 He that handleth a mat-
ter wisely shall find good ; and
is he ! whose trusteth in the Lord,
happy is he.

Shrewdness in a single barter may make a man rich for life ; so faith, by a single act, may redeem for ever.

Redemption as offered, though, is not enough. This begins a whole catalogue of cavils ! Where is the mercy of merely providing Christ, and no heart that I may accept him ?—

III.—CHAP. XVII : 16.

16 Why is this ?—a price in the hand of a stupid | 16 Wherefore is there a
man to get wisdom ; and no heart ? price in the hand of a fool to
get wisdom, seeing he hath
no heart to it ?

But, once in grace, it is mad not to persevere. Nay, our very path is upward. A dead level faith is an hypocrisy :—

IV.—CHAP. XV : 24.

24 The path of life is upward for the wise man ; | 24 The way of life is above
because of the turning from Sheol beneath. | to the wise, that he may de-
part from hell beneath.

And yet so sluggish is our earliest life, that our bargain seems a poor one. We grumble at the very prize we purchased. Our property grows upon us. Like a child's purchase we are shy about it at first ; but shall shout and boast when in our Father's Dwelling :—

V.—CHAP. XX : 14.

14 Bad, bad, says the buyer ; | 14 It is naught, it is naught,
but as he takes himself away, then he boasts. | saith the buyer ; but when he
is gone his way, then he boast-
eth.

Strength is not strength without piety. Piety seizes upon wealth, and makes it a blessing :—

VI.—CHAP. XXIV : 5.

5 A strong man, if wise, is as a power indeed ; | 5 A wise man is strong ;
and a man of knowledge makes strength | yea, a man of knowledge in-
creaseth strength.
really strong.

Impiety turns everything into a curse. "A stone is weighty ;" and place it where you will, it is pressing downward. So impenitence increases in depravity. Painful or joyous, it has no emotion that does not sink it :—

VII.—CHAP. XXVII : 3.

3 A stone is heavy, and the sand is weighty ; | 3 A stone is heavy, and the
sand weighty ; but a fool's
wrath is heavier than them
both.

CLASS LVII.

OVERLOOKED ALLUSIONS TO THE DEITY.

We merely quote these. If our Commentary (which see) is correct, it will help that to appear if we look at them as they are arranged together:—

I.—CHAP. xxiii : 1-8.

- 1 Forasmuch as thou sittest to eat with a Ruler, discern well Who is before thee ;
- 2 and thou hast put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.
- 3 Long not after His dainty meats ; while He is Himself deceitful food.
- 4 Labor not to create wealth. Cease from thine own discernment.
- 5 Wilt thou fly after Him with thine eyes, and He not there ? For He is certain to make to Himself wings as an eagle, and fly away to heaven.
- 6 Feed not on the food of Him that has an evil eye ; and long not after His dainty meats.
- 7 For as He has made an estimate in His soul, so is He. Eat and drink, He says to thee ; but His heart is not with thee.
- 8 Thy morsel, that thou hast eaten, thou shalt vomit up ; and lose thy sweet words.

II.—CHAP. xxiv : 21-26.

- 21 Fear Jehovah, my son, and the King. With them given to change have thou nothing to do.
- 22 For Their heavy inflictions shall come suddenly ; and the destruction by the Two, who is there that knows ?
- 23 Even as to These, for the wise to be partial in judgment is not good.
- 24 Him that says to the wicked,—Thou art righteous, nations shall curse, peoples shall treat with indignation.
- 25 And to them that set the thing right it shall be pleasant ; and upon them shall come the blessing of the good man.
- 26 He kisses lips, who returns straight-forward words.

1 When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee ;

2 And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.

3 Be not desirous of his dainties ; for they are deceitful meat.

4 Labour not to be rich ; cease from thine own wisdom.

5 Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not ? for ~~aches~~ certainly make themselves wings ; they fly away, as an eagle toward heaven.

6 Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats ;

7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he : Eat and drink, saith he to thee ; but his heart is not with thee.

8 The morsel *which* thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words.

21 My son, fear thou the Lord and the king ; and meddle not with them that are given to change :

22 For their calamity shall rise suddenly ; and who knoweth the ruin of them both ?

23 These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment.

24 He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous ; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him :

25 But to them that rebuke him shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them.

26 Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer.

III.—CHAP. XXXV : 2-7.

- 2 It is the glory of Gods to cover over a thing,
but the glory of Kings to search a thing out.
- 3 The heavens, as to height, and the earth, as
to depth,
and the heart of Kings there is no searching.
- 4 Try dross from silver,
and there comes forth a vessel for the finer.
- 5 Try the wicked before the King,
and His throne is set firm in righteousness.
- 6 Trick not thyself out before the King;
and in the place of the great stand not thou
up.
- 7 For it is better to say to thee,—Come up
hither;
than to put thee down before the Prince
whom thine eyes have seen.

² It is the glory of God to
conceal a thing: but the hon-
our of kings is to search out a
matter.

³ The heaven for height,
and the earth for depth, and
the heart of kings is unsearch-
able.

⁴ Take away the dross from
the silver, and there shall
come forth a vessel for the
finer.

⁵ Take away the wicked
from before the king, and his
throne shall be established in
righteousness.

⁶ Put not forth thyself in
the presence of the king, and
stand not in the place of great
men:

⁷ For better it is that it be
said unto thee, Come up hither,
than that thou shouldest
be put lower in the presence
of the prince whom thine
eyes have seen.

CLASS LVIII.

OVERLOOKED MESSIANIC PROPHECIES.

Here also, as they are long, we will simply transcribe the passages:—

I.—CHAP. XXX : 1-4.

- 1 Words of I-Fear, Son of the Godly; The Prophecy:—
The Strong Man speaks to God-with-me,
to God-with-me and to I-am-able.
- 2 Forasmuch as I am more brutish as to myself, than a man of the better sort,
and have not the intelligence of a common man,
- 3 and have not been taught wisdom,
and yet know the knowledge of holy things;
- 4 who has gone up to heaven and come down?
who has gathered the winds in his fists?
who has bound the waters in a garment?
who has set firm all the extremities of the earth?
what is his name, and what is his son's name?
Because, Thou knowest.

¹ The words of Agur, the son of Jakob, even the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal.

² Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man.

³ I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.

⁴ Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?

II.—CHAP. XXXI : 1-9.

- 1 Words in respect to the Seed-of-God, a King; a prophecy in agreement with which His mother disciplined Him.
- 2 What is my son? And what is the son of my womb?
and what the son of my vows?

¹ The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him.

² What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows?

- 3 Give not thy strength to women ;
or thy ways so as to destroy kings.
4 Let it not be for kings, for the seed of God ;
let it not be for kings to drink wine ;
nor for princes ; or strong drink :
5 lest one drink, and forget what is command-
ed,
and set wrong the cause of any of the sons
of misery.
6 Give ye strong drink to him that is being
lost ;
and wine to the embittered in soul.
7 Let him drink, and forget his wretchedness,
and remember his trouble no more.
8 Open thy mouth for the dumb man,
to plead the cause of all the children of a
change.
9 Open thy mouth ; judge righteousness ;
and plead the cause of the afflicted and needy.
- 3 Give not thy strength
unto women, nor thy ways to
that which destroyeth kings.
4 *It is not for kings, O Le-*
muel, it is not for kings to
drink wine, nor for princes
strong drink :
5 *Lest they drink and for-*
get the law, and pervert the
judgment of any of the af-
flicted.
6 *Give strong drink unto*
him that is ready to perish,
and wine unto those that be
of heavy hearts.
7 *Let him drink, and forget*
his poverty, and remember
his misery no more.
8 *Open thy mouth for the*
dumb in the cause of all such
as are appointed to destruc-
tion.
9 *Open thy mouth, judge*
righteously, and plead the
cause of the poor and needy.

Notice ;—Two people are expressing wonder. One is an Incarnate, the other, depraved and human. They are similar, however. One is a Strange Offspring, and He is wondering at Himself ; and the other is His mother, and she is wondering at her Strange Offspring. Both are human ; though One is also divine. Learn this, therefore ;—that the Divine-Human was so much like the mere human, as to grow in knowledge. Growing in knowledge, He was of course ignorant (Matt. 24 : 36) ; and, being ignorant, we are to treat more practically than we usually do, much of the history. He was very man. Merely as very man, of course He was finite. Being finite, of course He was ignorant. Being ignorant, He is so still. Orthodoxy is strangely damaged by suffering any of its lines to be defaced. He has either ceased to be very man, or He is still growing in knowledge. And if He still grows in knowledge, we must expect to see a man like ourselves. He is infinite in His nature as God ; but He must continue to be finite for the God to be incarnate. That He chose Judas, then (Matt. 10 : 4), knowing that he had a devil ; that He rebuffed His mother (Jo. 2 : 4), knowing that His hour had come ; and that He knew everything all through His apprenticeship with His father,—is true of His knowledge as God (Jo. 2 : 25), but neither exemplary or possible in His conduct as a Creature.

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